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No. 944

NOVEMBER 2, 1923

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FAME ⁵⁶⁴⁷ AND FORTUNE

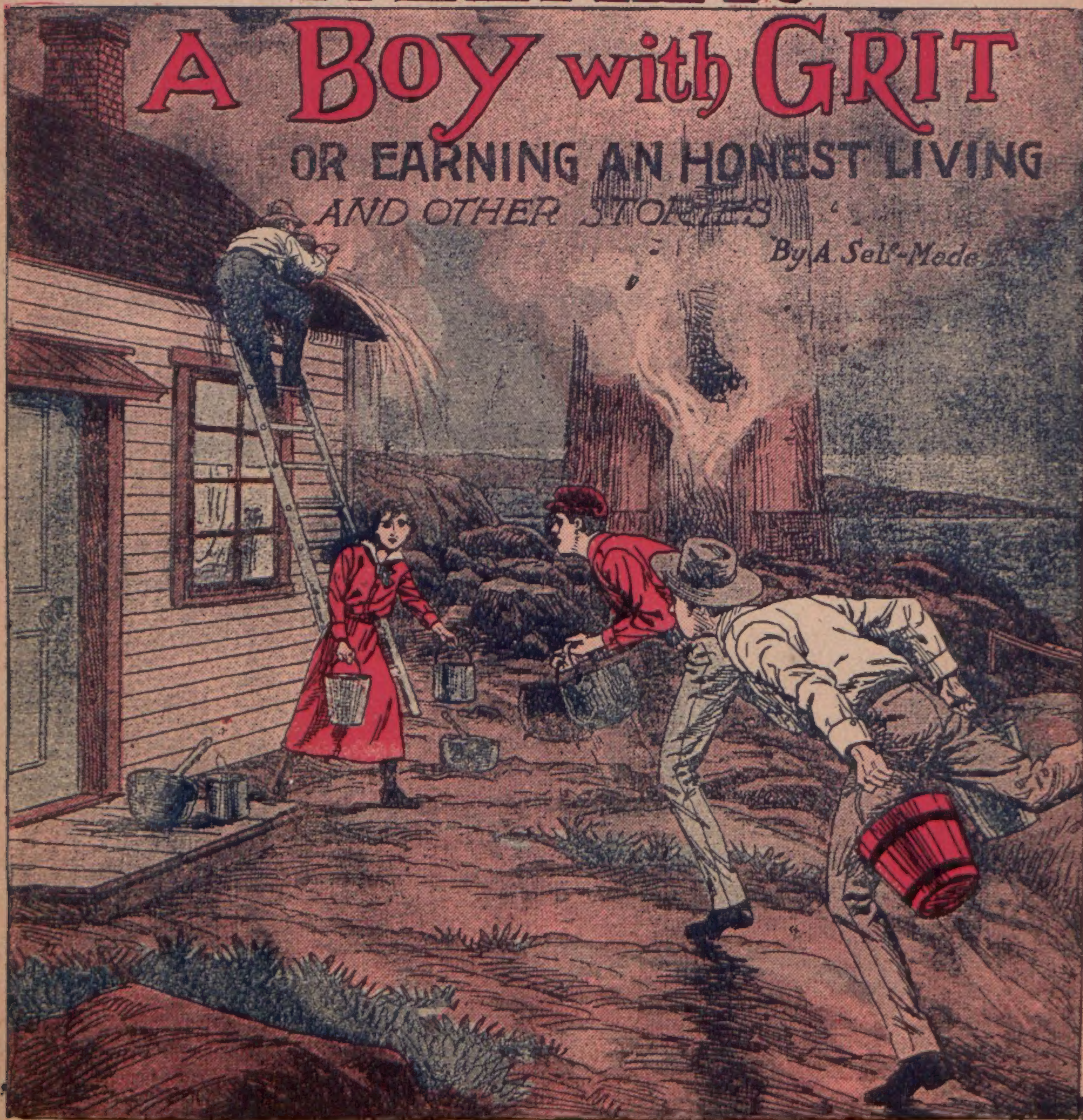
STORIES
OF
BOYS

WEEKLY. WHO MAKE
MONEY.

A Boy with GRIT

OR EARNING AN HONEST LIVING
AND OTHER STORIES

By A Self-Made



No time was lost in explanation, the lads getting a couple of buckets and joining the effort to save the dwelling, which was smoking in spots under the heat of the near-by flames. It was hot and laborious

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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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No. 944

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 2, 1923

Price 7 Cents

A BOY WITH GRIT OR, EARNING AN HONEST LIVING

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—The Burning of the Lighthouse.

Boom! A dull roar, like the report of a giant rocket, came across the calm water of the inlet.

"What's that?" exclaimed Eric Gordon, a stalwart boy of seventeen, in a startled voice.

He paused in the act of dipping his oars in the water.

"Sounded like an explosion," replied Will Batterson, his companion, who was steering the small boat in which the two boys were embarked.

"It came from the direction of the lighthouse," said Eric.

"That's what it did," answered Will.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

"There it is again," added Will. "Can it be from a Sound steamer in distress?"

"By the great hornspoon! Look yonder!" cried Eric, excitedly.

A great red flare rose into the night air above the trees which lined the shore close to which the boat floated, and cast a lurid glare upon the surface of the inlet.

"Golly!" ejaculated Will. "Must be a Sound steamer on fire."

"Or the lighthouse on the Point," suggested Eric, with a shade of anxiety in his voice, for Andrew Wales, the keeper, was something more than a mere acquaintance of his, while Grace Wales, his pretty daughter, was an object of special interest to the lad.

Two more roars in rapid succession rolled over the water, and a pillar of flame shot into the air fifty feet high.

"It must be the lighthouse!" cried Eric, pulling hard at one of the oars to turn the boat around. "Look how near the light is. If it was the steamer it would be away out some distance on the Sound."

"I guess you're right, old man," admitted Will.

"I'm afraid I am. The lighthouse is certainly all of a blaze, though we can't see it from here."

"You're going back to the Point, then?"

"We must. Think of Andrew Wales! He must be in great danger, if he hasn't already been burned to death. We must save him, if that is possible."

"That's right," agreed Will. "I'm with you, bet your life!"

"Too bad we haven't another pair of oars," said Eric, as he bent down to work with great energy.

"It can't be helped now. Let me know when you feel tired."

It didn't take but a dozen lusty strokes to clear the land in the shadow of which the boat had been when the explosions first attracted the attention of the boys. Will Batterson watched the conflagration with fascinated gaze, while Eric, after his first glance, gave his attention resolutely to the work in hand, putting every ounce of power in his muscular arms into his stroke. The two boys had been out fishing on Long Island Sound that afternoon, and success not crowning their sport until near sundown, they had lingered until after darkness had settled down upon the face of the waters. Then with a good bunch of fish in the bottom of the boat, they started for home, Eric resisting the temptation to land near the lighthouse and make a brief call on Grace Wales, who kept house for her father in the dwelling a short distance from the tower which held the lantern. They had got under the lee of the curving bight of land mentioned above when the explosion took place.

"Hello!" exclaimed Will suddenly, pointing in the direction of the shore. "There's a boat yonder, with three persons in it pulling away from the Point. They seem to be hugging the shadows."

"Maybe it's Andrew Wales, Grace and somebody else, making for town," said Eric, pausing in his rowing, and looking in the direction indicated.

"It's mighty funny those chaps are rowing away from the fire," replied Eric, in some perplexity, as he renewed his work at the oars. "They ought to be doing just the opposite, for Andrew Wales needs all the assistance he can get to save his house."

"It seems to me they're trying to get away as fast as two of them can row the boat. If you want to know my opinion, I think it's mighty suspicious. Who knows but those chaps set fire to the lighthouse?"

"If we had time I'd like to head them off, if we could, and ask them why they are leaving the lighthouse-keeper in the lurch," said Eric, indignantly.

The boys could now hear the clang of the alarm bell in the distant town of Manhasset.

"The fire department will be down here soon on a naphtha oyster boat," said Eric; "but they'll never be able to save the wooden lighthouse. In

fact. Mr. Wales will be lucky if he saves his dwelling from the fire."

"We'll be at work giving him a hand in just about two minutes," said Will.

Eric made a final spurt, and the boat presently struck bottom and ran up the beach for half its length. The boys jumped out, pulled it a few feet higher, then abandoned it, running toward the blazing beacon as fast as they could. Andrew Wales and his daughter were both surprised and pleased to see Eric and Will. No time was lost in explanations, the lads getting a couple of buckets and joining the effort to save the dwelling, which was smoking in spots under the heat of the nearby flames. It was hot and laborious work carrying water from the inlet and dashing it upon the roof and endangered side of the building. Fortunately a slight change in the direction of the light wind then blowing veered the sparks and smoke, as well as the trend of the flames, southward.

"I guess the house is safe now," remarked Andrew Wales, pausing to mop the perspiration from his brow. "How came you boys to be on hand at this hour of the night?"

"We were out fishing, Will and I, in the Sound, and had got about half a mile up the inlet when we heard the roar of the first explosion behind us. Will thought the sound came from a steamer, but we knew better when the flames started up in the air. As soon as we got a clear view in this direction we saw the lighthouse a mass of fire from the beach to the lantern, so we started back to help you out if we could."

"You were both very kind to do so," replied Grace, beaming especially on Eric. "You came just in time to be of the most use. I'm afraid father and I could not have managed to save the house alone. We are very grateful to you."

"Here comes the engine on an oyster boat," exclaimed Will, at that moment.

The four looked up the inlet and saw a naphtha boat scooting along toward the point at a lively rate, with a hand fire engine and a dozen members of the Manhasset Volunteer Fire Department on board.

"We'll let the fire chaps do the rest, boys," said Andrew Wales; "though I think we've done about all that's necessary."

Eric and Will were glad to be relieved from further work, for they were pretty well used up by their unusual exertions. The oyster boat now came close in shore, the firemen leaped out and waded to the beach, then skids were laid and the engine landed.

"How did it happen, Wales?" asked the foreman of the engine company.

The light-keeper shook his head.

"I wasn't in the lighthouse at the time the fire started. I can't account for it, unless one of the lamps exploded and ignited the building."

"We can't do much good with that fire. The tower is gutted out from cellar to lantern. However, since we've come out here, we may as well put up a good bluff."

Accordingly, in a few moments a stream was turned on the blazing lighthouse.

"I'd like to ask you a question, Mr. Wales," said Eric, while the four were watching the work of the town volunteer fire department from the door of the house.

"Well, I'll answer it if I can," smiled the light-keeper.

"Do you know of any reason why the lighthouse might have been set on fire?"

CHAPTER II.—The Black Sloop.

"What put that idea in your head?" asked the light-keeper at last.

"The reason I asked the question," replied Eric, "was because Will and I saw three men rowing away from the point immediately after the fire started."

"Three men!" ejaculated Andrew Wales.

"Yes. We regarded the circumstance as suspicious. Why should those men be hustling away from the locality when they should rather have been hastening to your assistance?"

"Could you describe those men to me?" asked the light-keeper, anxiously.

"No, sir. We were not near enough to recognize them," answered Eric.

"It was I who first noticed and pointed them out to Eric," interposed Will. "They hugged the shore, as if seeking its shadows; but at one point they came within the glare of the flames, and I should say that two of them appeared to be large men. They were doing the rowing, while a younger and smaller person sat in the stern and steered."

"Your description does not enlighten me much. There is only one man I could suspect in connection with this crime, and he hasn't been seen in this neighborhood for nearly two years."

"Who is that?" asked Eric.

"Edward Ringle, my nephew."

"Wasn't he your assistant here at one time?"

"Yes. He is my dead sister's son, and, I am sorry to say, a thoroughly unprincipled young man. I picked him out of the gutter, almost, in New York, brought him down here, fed, clothed him, and allowed him spending money out of my own small wages, hoping that I might be able to win him from his vicious ways. The return he made for all my kindness was to try, through some political pull he managed to acquire, to have me discharged and himself appointed in my place. He failed. Then he left me, swearing that some day he would get square with me."

"Then it must have been he who——"

"I beg of you, Eric Gordon, and you, too, Will Batterson, not to say anything that will cause suspicion to rest on my nephew," said Andrew Wales, hastily. "I have no knowledge that he has returned to these parts, and if he has I would not want to be the cause of his being jailed on so serious a charge as arson. The Government would have little mercy on him were the crime brought to his door. Remember, he is the son of my only and favorite sister, and, despite his ingratitude, the ties of blood bid me shield him for his dead mother's sake."

"Of course, Will, I won't say a word about what we saw, if you wish it."

By this time the beacon was reduced to a shapeless, smoking ruin, and the firemen desisted from their labor, as all danger of further damage being done by the languishing flames was over. Andrew Wales thanked the volunteer fire-

men in the name of the Government. (Two months later the Secretary of the Treasury officially conveyed to all concerned in that affair the thanks of the department, and at the same time awarded the sum of \$500 to be divided between Eric and Will for their efforts in saving the house adjoining the lighthouse.) Then all hands satisfied their thirst with copious draughts of fresh milk, of which the Wales establishment had plenty, for they kept a cow.

"We can save half the row that's before us up the inlet by attaching our painter to the stern of the oyster boat," grinned Will. "They'll give us a tow as far as the mouth of the creek, from which point we can pull the balance of the way to Sayville."

"That suits me all right," replied Eric. "I'm not hankering after any more exercise to-night than I can help."

"Those are my sentiments, bet your life!" chuckled Will.

So the two boys, after bidding Grace and her father good-by, hauled their boat around close to the naphtha craft, and, while the firemen were pushing the engine on board, made fast to her sten-post. Then with a cheer for the light-keeper and his daughter, the engine started and the boat, dragging the skiff with the boys seated at their ease, started for Manhasset. Two miles from the town, Eric hailed the man who was tending the naphtha engine, and he shut off the power long enough for the boy to untie his painter. There was an interchange of good-nights and the boys, Will at the oars, headed for the mouth of the creek near at hand.

"It must be all of ten o'clock by this time," said Eric, as they approached close in to the shore.

"I'll bet it is," answered Will. "My father will be waiting for me with a club."

"Hello!" exclaimed Eric. "There's a sloop anchored in here."

"Whereabouts?" asked Will, whose back was turned to the direction they were heading.

"We'll pass her in a moment, close enough to toss a biscuit on board. She's as black as the ace of spades. I just observed her by chance."

The skiff was soon abreast of the black sloop, and was slowly drifting by her, Will having stopped rowing to look at her. There was not a sign of life to be noticed aboard of her.

"Geel!" cried Will, in a low tone, "she looks like one of those ghostly vessels I've read about in novels."

"Say, I think you can talk better than you can row to-night. Give me the oars and I'll pull the rest of the way up the river."

The boys exchanged places and presently left the black sloop far behind. It was a quarter past eleven when Eric entered the kitchen of his home. The house stood by itself under the shade of a wide spreading elm tree on the one street the village of Sayville boasted. The front was fitted up as a general store, and was presided over by Mrs. Gordon, who was also the postmistress of the place and for the immediate neighborhood. Packages were accepted here for delivery to the American Express Co.'s agent in Manhasset, or, for that matter, to anybody within a radius of ten miles or so. It was Eric's duty to open the store at seven in the morning and

close it at night. He carried the Sayville mail-bag to the Manhasset post-office morning and afternoon, and, after transacting such other business as fell to his lot, returned to the village with the mail for that place.

For that purpose he used a big covered wagon and a mare, which, though she had seen better days, was still active and efficient. When not otherwise employed, Eric waited on customers of the store. On this particular afternoon he had arranged with another boy to make the second trip to Manhasset, so he could go fishing with Will Batterson, his chum.

CHAPTER III.—Clarence Chudleigh.

Eric Gordon had just returned from his first trip to Manhasset. It was half-past nine by the clock in the store on the morning following the destruction of the lighthouse, and the day was Saturday. He had turned the horse loose in the big grassy yard behind the stable, distributed the mail in the various pigeon-holes in the little nook in the front part of the store devoted to the post-office department, and there being no customers on hand to be waited on, he had perched himself on a stool with his back to the door, absorbed in a copy of that week's Manhasset News, fresh from the press, when Clarence Chudleigh, the sixteen-year-old son of Squire Chudleigh, lawyer and justice of the peace for Sayville, walked consequentially into the place.

"I'll take our mail, please," said Clarence, in a lofty tone.

He was the best-dressed boy in the village, and, as his parents were the most important persons in that immediate locality, he had a very considerable opinion of his own sweet self, and not a little contempt for those whose worldly position was on a lower plane than his own. Eric, at the moment, was deeply interested in the story of the burning of the lighthouse on the Point, the account of which the editor had gathered from interviews with some of the volunteer firemen who had officiated at the conflagration, and as Clarence didn't happen to speak very loud, he failed to notice his entrance or hear his request. Finding that Eric Gordon paid no attention to him, Clarence got a bit warm under the collar. He rapped the counter smartly with his little cane, and snorted:

"See here, you store boy, are you going to wait on me?"

This time Eric became aware of his presence, turned around quickly and said pleasantly:

"What can I do for you, Clarence?"

"Why didn't you wait on me at once?" demanded young Chudleigh, indignantly.

"That's what I'm doing, isn't it?" said Eric.

"No, it isn't," replied the young dude, sourly. "I came in here two minutes ago and asked for our mail, and you paid no attention to me."

"I'm sorry if I have kept you waiting," replied Eric, with just the suspicion of an amused smile about the corners of his mouth. "But if you spoke before I didn't hear you."

"It's your place to hear me. That's what you're here for. It seems to me you put on a good many airs for a store boy," contemptuously.

"I wasn't aware that I put on any airs," replied Eric, quietly.

"Then why don't you hand me our mail?" said Clarence, rudely.

"Certainly," answered Eric, reaching for a well-filled pigeon-hole and laying the contents thereof before Chudleigh.

"Do you expect me to carry them in that loose way?" snarled Clarence, in a disagreeable tone.

"What do you wish me to do? Tie a string about them?" suiting the action to the word. "There you are. Is that satisfactory?"

Clarence didn't thank him for his courtesy, but simply tossed a written slip on the counter in a supercilious way, saying:

"Fill that order for groceries and take them to the house as soon as possible. Do you understand?"

"I'll carry them around in an hour," said Eric, calmly.

Several people now came in for their mail and to make purchases, or get a novel, for Mrs. Gordon kept a small circulating library, in the shape of a case of fifty books in popular demand, which collection was changed every few months by the firm in New York which furnished them. Among others who dropped in was Will Batterson, who came for the copy of the Manhasset Times to which his father subscribed. Eric happened to be idle when his chum entered the store, and, after the usual greeting, pointed out to him the account of last night's fire at the Point.

"Ho!" exclaimed Will, after reading it, "I don't see our names mentioned to any alarming extent, and I rather guess we helped save Mr. Wales' dwelling all right."

"Well, you see, we're only boys, and the editor must have overlooked us," grinned Eric.

"I say," said Will, "you're going to the picnic this afternoon, aren't you?"

"I mean to, if I can get any one to look after the mail."

"Can't you get Morrison to make the trip again to-day?"

"I'm afraid that would be imposing on good nature. It was very good of him to help me out yesterday, otherwise I couldn't have gone fishing with you. Besides, he may want to attend the picnic himself. He belongs to the Sunday-school."

"You've got to come, if you can manage it at all. All the girls expect to see you there."

"Do they?" grinned Eric.

"Sure. At any rate, Grace Wales will be there all right."

"Maybe not, after the fire."

"What has the fire to do with her? They weren't burned out. Now I've got a particular reason for wanting you to be on hand."

"What is that?" asked Eric, curiously.

"I shall probably want you to take my place in the boat-race."

"Take your place? How is that?"

"I sprained one of my wrists a bit this morning, and if it isn't in first-class shape by three o'clock I shan't go in against Clarence and the others. You can enter yourself at the last moment and use my boat."

"I shouldn't think you'd let any chance slip by you to win that \$10 prize."

"Unless I'm in prime condition, there isn't any

use of my competing. Clarence is about as good as I am, and he's got a better and faster boat. He's sure to win if I have to drop out, unless you step into my shoes."

"How do you know that I can beat Chudleigh? He's been practicing ever since the contest was announced. He's not so bad, either. I was watching him on the river the other evening, and he seems to have speed."

"He has a big advantage in the boat, which is practically new and a first-class article; but, of course, that can't be helped. I am confident you can outrow him on the lake, where the picnic will be held. At any rate, it will give me a heap of satisfaction to see him taken down a peg or two. He thinks he's the whole thing."

"Well," replied Eric, with sparkling eyes, "I wouldn't object to taking a shy at that tenner. It would come in handy if I was fortunate to win it. I'll have a talk with mother, and see if I can get off."

"That's right," answered Will, in a tone of satisfaction. "I'll be around after you by half-past twelve, at any rate."

CHAPTER IV.—The Boat-Race.

A Sunday-school of Sayville had arranged to have their annual picnic on the shore of Placid Lake, a small and charming sheet of water two miles distant from the village, and a large attendance was expected. A number of "events" were on the programme for the afternoon, chief among which was the boat-race—a competition in which four boys, who were the fortunate possessors of good rowboats, had entered for the prize of \$10, donated by the superintendent. Clarence Chudleigh was the first to send in his name. He owned the finest boat in the neighborhood, and constant practice had made him quite a fair oarsman, though whether he possessed the strength and vim to cover a half-mile course and return, under exciting conditions, was another question. In his opinion, he believed he was a sure winner.

Eric Gordon would have entered for the race if he had owned or could have hired a really good boat for the occasion, also provided he could have found some one to fill his place in the mail wagon—for that was a duty which had to be attended to, rain or shine. He had a natural love for the water, and this, of course, meant that anything in connection with boats was right in his line. He could sail a catboat with uncommon skill, in all kinds of weather, while, as for rowing, he was there with both feet—having watched the performances of experts in Manhasset Bay many a time, talked with them on the subject and profited by what he thus acquired. Physically he was well fitted for the task of driving a rowboat at good speed for a considerable distance. Inability to enter the competition for the \$10 prize had been a source of great disappointment to him; therefore, the reader can imagine his joy when Will Batterson signified his probable intention of withdrawing in his favor and loaning him his boat. Promptly at half-past twelve Will drove his father's light wagon, with his boat in it, up to the post-office and general store.

This time he had an arnica-soaked rag bound about his right wrist.

"Well, are you coming?" he asked, as Eric appeared at the door with his hat and best clothes on.

"Yes," replied his chum, cheerily. "Morrison isn't going to the picnic, and has promised to look after the mail again this afternoon, so I'm free for the rest of the day."

"That's prime," said Will. "It's up to you to win that race this afternoon, for I'm out of it for fair. Why, I can hardly hold the reins with that hand."

"Is that a fact? How came you to do it, anyway?"

"I tried to be funny this morning. Turned a couple of handsprings, to show Beasley how well I could do them, when—well, what's the use of talking, I threw my weight on my right wrist accidentally and it turned on me."

"It's too bad. I'm sorry you're out of the race, though I won't deny I'm just tickled to death at the idea of taking a hand in it myself."

"Next to myself, I'd sooner see you win than anybody else. I guess you know that. From what I've seen you do in the rowing line, I think there isn't the least doubt but you'll come in first."

"I hope so."

"It will be a disagreeable surprise for Clarence if you do. He's been telling all around the village that he's got a mortgage on that tenner. It will knock some of the conceit out of him if you do him up."

Most of the young people were already on the ground when Will and Eric drove up to a shed where a number of buggies and wagons were hitched. Lifting the boat out of the vehicle, the two boys carried it down to the little wharf close by, and then tied the painter to a ring-bolt. Clarence was already afloat in a gaudy sweater, pulling leisurely about with a couple of girl passengers. His purpose was to show off and gain the admiration of the crowd, though he pretended not to notice that any one was looking at him. The race had been announced for three o'clock. At half-past two Eric walked down to the wharf, pulled off his coat, and stepped into Will's boat. He intended to warm up preparatory to the real business before him. Chudleigh had come ashore and was standing on the wharf with a couple of his cronies.

"Here," he exclaimed, authoritatively, "don't go off in that boat, Eric Gordon."

"Why not?" asked Eric, smiling, as he leaned forward to untie the painter.

"Because I tell you not to. Isn't that enough?" snorted Clarence.

"Excuse me, but this boat belongs to Will Batterson."

"I know it does."

"And I have his permission to use it."

"You have, like fun," replied Clarence, incredulously. "Don't you know he's going to use it presently in the race which comes off in less than half an hour?"

"Don't you worry about that."

"Did he really say you could use it for a while?"

"That's what he did. I want to practice a bit before I start in the race."

"What's that?" cried Clarence, in surprise.

"You start in the race. I guess not."

"What's the reason I won't?"

"You haven't any boat."

"What's the matter with this one?"

"That's Batterson's."

"Well, I'm going to take his place. He's hurt his wrist and can't row," said Eric, coolly.

At three o'clock almost everybody lined up along the lake as close as possible to the starting point, which was also the finishing line. The half-way mark was indicated by a small skiff manned by one of the boys, which was moored about half a mile down the lake. There were four competitors who drew for choice of positions. Clarence, with a smile of satisfaction, got the inner one, while the short end of all came to Eric, who had to take the outside.

Chudleigh, therefore, had all the advantage, and being recognized as a good rower was first favorite when the signal to go was given by Superintendent Brown. The four boats went off like one, but in a very short time Clarence was seen to be forging to the front. He was very much excited, and, being ambitious to win by as large a margin as possible, was pulling a rapid stroke—in fact, was overdoing things at the start, which showed very poor judgment on his part, and was liable to jeopardize his chances of winning. The next two were pretty evenly matched, but on the whole were overexerting themselves, also, in order to match the pace set by Clarence. As for Eric, he started off with a long, steady stroke, and maintained it even when he saw he was falling behind. Chudleigh chuckled to himself when he saw he was pulling slowly but surely away from the rest of the bunch.

"Ho! I knew they wouldn't be in it with me. As for that store boy," he added, contemptuously, "he isn't so much, after all."

Clarence swung around the half-way boat with a comfortable lead, while his rivals seemed to be struggling hopelessly in the rear. Eric saw a chance to get the inner track of the other two at this point and at the same time save the extra exertion of a wide turn. So he put on a little steam, increased his stroke by two to the minute, which gave a lead sufficient to enable him to safely and squarely cut across the bows of the others. Clarence observed the spurt, but it didn't worry him a little bit.

"I'm two lengths ahead. and I'm going to make it three right here."

But he didn't, though he tried to row a quicker stroke still. The fact was that he had reached the end of his powers and was absolutely at Eric's mercy, if the boy was able to take advantage of the situation. Eric, however, didn't try for a little while, but dropped back to his former stroke, which was carrying him along easily, and at a speed which even then was beginning to tell on Chudleigh's lead. Clarence was presently compelled to ease up.

He was quite blown and suffering some distress. Then the spectators alongshore saw Eric close up the space between the two boats. Eric had got within about three-quarters of a length of him before Clarence began to realize that he was losing ground. Then he tried to make a

grand effort, for they were nearing the finish line. But it wasn't in him.

Eric, as fresh almost as when he started, now got down to business, and when he ran his stroke up to his limit, he went by Clarence as though the young aristocrat was anchored to the bottom. There was cheering galore when Eric crossed the line three lengths ahead of his chagrined rival, and the person who made the most noise was Will Batterson, who would have stood on his head from very glee, if his wrist had not been injured.

CHAPTER V.—The Old Gardner Homestead.

Eric's victory was rather a surprise to the spectators, most of whom had been confident that Chudleigh would win.

"Allow me to congratulate you, Master Gordon," said Superintendent Brown, taking Eric by the hand. "The honor of presenting you with the fruits of your success has been delegated to Miss Grace Wales. If you will step on the platform, the ceremony will be gone through with."

The boy would rather have been excused from being made the mark of a hundred pairs of eyes, but there was no help for it. Blushing as if he had been guilty of some wicked deed, Eric Gordon mounted the low platform for dancing purposes, and approached the smiling Grace, who held a crisp, new ten-dollar bill in her shapely hand which it was her duty to present to the winner of the boat-race. The picnickers gathered around in a deep semi-circle and focussed the handsome pair with their interested eyes.

"Eric Gordon," began Grace, "you have won the boat-race, and now it gives me great pleasure to hand you the prize of ten dollars."

She held it out to him.

"I thank you very much, Miss Grace," he blurted out, as he accepted it, with his eyes on her fair countenance. "Also Mr. Brown. I can only say that I tried my best to win for the honor of the thing, and am very glad I succeeded."

"Three cheers for Eric Gordon!" sung out Will Batterson.

The cheers were given with much vim, and that concluded the ceremonies. Eric got back to the house about six o'clock. He found his mother entertaining a couple of visitors in the little parlor off the store. They were two old maid sisters, nearly sixty years of age, who lived with one small female servant in an old-fashioned mansion, of ante-Revolutionary days, about a mile outside of Sayville on the country road. Their names were Phoebe and Priscilla Gardner. They were the descendants of one of the earliest settlers of Long Island.

Their father had been a wealthy and prosperous farmer, and he had left his two girls well provided for life. They owned many well-kept farms in the neighborhood, from which they received comfortable rentals, usually in cash. They also were reputed to possess a quantity of gilt-edged bonds stored away somewhere in the old house, as checks for the semi-annual interest were known to reach them with unfailing regularity. It happened that a considerable sum of money—a matter of \$1,500—had been paid to the old la-

dies that afternoon by a farmer who had received a windfall and used a portion of it to liquidate a mortgage held on his farm by the Misses Gardner.

He had ridden over and paid them in gold and bills, and Miss Phoebe and Miss Priscilla were much embarrassed by the possession of so much cash, which they foresaw they would not be able to bank before Monday morning. They had a confirmed horror of the house being entered by burglars and their possessions looted past recovery. The fact that quite a number of houses along the north shore had been entered by thieves of late, and many articles of value carried off, further impressed them with a sense of their lonesome and almost helpless position on the outskirts.

But the unexpected acquisition of so much money capped the climax. So, after putting their heads together, they decided to call on Mrs. Gordon, the postmistress, and beg her to permit her stalwart son, Eric, whom the two old ladies knew well and liked very much, to come out to the mansion and remain with them as a protector until Monday.

"I shall be glad to oblige, if Eric is willing," replied Mrs. Gordon.

It was at this point that Eric made his appearance, and having been consulted on the subject expressed his readiness to oblige the old sisters. Mrs. Gordon prevailed on them to stay to tea. At the conclusion of the meal, Eric got in their double-seated buggy and drove them out home. As matters turned out, it was a lucky thing, indeed, that the sisters managed to secure the brave boy to stand guard, as it were, over their lonely home, for it happened that during their conversation with Mrs. Gordon a stranger had entered the store unobserved and had managed to overhear all they said about the money which had been paid to them that afternoon.

He was not an honest man, as events demonstrated, for he quickly made his way to a small boat which had brought him up the river to Sayville and rowed back to the creek with all speed. He boarded the black sloop, which still lay at anchor in the same spot where Eric and Will had noticed it the previous night, and was received on board as one who had a right there. He called the two men who were lounging on deck into the small cabin, and for the next half hour was in close consultation with them. About nine o'clock that night the man in question, accompanied by one of his associates, left the black sloop in the boat and pulled up the river in the direction of the village. Eric had often visited the Gardner homestead, as it was called, with mail matter for the two sisters, as the mansion was on his daily route to Manhasset; but he had never stopped more than a few minutes at a time, though the Misses Gardner had frequently tried to press their hospitality upon him. They had a very high opinion of the bright boy, and often made him such small presents as they felt he would accept for kindness in bringing them their mail. Now that he was going to remain at the mansion for two nights and a day, Eric began to have some curiosity as to what the old place really looked like inside. As soon as they drove into the yard, Eric helped the small servant unhitch the mare and put her in the stable.

Then he backed the buggy into its place in the barn. Having nothing further to do in that line, he entered the house and found the two old maids upstairs in their sitting-room.

The three conversed pleasantly for about an hour, then Miss Priscilla, the senior sister, showed Eric to the room he was to occupy. It was located in the L at the rear of the building—a square, nicely-furnished room with two windows, one of which was shaded by a venerable oak tree, whose gnarled and stout limbs beat against that end of the mansion when the wind was high. There was no wind that night, however, and a great bunch of leaves and twigs lay motionless against the window-pane. As Eric looked out, he could see the rising moon indistinctly through the thick foliage of the oak. There was a chimney and an open grate in the room. Above the mantelpiece, which was ornamented with a large shell from the South Seas, flanked on either side by a pair of tall, ancient-looking candlesticks of bronze, hung a stout musket and powder-horn which had been used in the Revolutionary War by the Misses Gardner's grandfather. Eric had a weakness for guns, so he made bold to take down the old-time musket and examine it.

"This looks to be in pretty good condition," he mused. "I wouldn't mind going squirrel-hunting with that. It isn't a bit rusty, but needs a little oiling up to make it serviceable. I wish it belonged to me."

He lifted the powder-horn and found it was tolerably heavy. Tipping it up and pushing the brass clasp which covered the vent, a little stream of powder ran into the palm of his hand. There was a bag, too, containing half a hundred home-made bullets.

"Well," he said, half aloud, as he hung the gun up again, "if a burglar comes this way while I'm here I may be able to give him a warm reception; that is, if this old shooting-iron doesn't explode or kick my shoulder out of joint."

He said this in jest, as he hadn't the slightest idea that the house would be bothered by gentry of that sort. All the same, it is the unexpected which most often happens.

CHAPTER VI.—On Guard.

Whether it was the strangeness of his surroundings or something he had eaten for supper which didn't rest well on his stomach, certain it is Eric Gordon didn't rest as well as usual after he fell asleep in the quaint old four-post bedstead. A noise at the window shaded by the oak tree awakened him, and he sat bolt upright in bed. The moon was rising just above the treetop and flooded a part of the room with its mellow light. Another thump on the window drew his eyes in that direction. Clearly the sound had been caused by the tree, for the giant limb was shaking as if moved by the wind. Thud! Once more the limb smote the window.

"The wind must have risen since I came to bed," thought Eric, as he watched the leaves and twigs quiver and shake. "It's a fine night all right. I wonder what time it is."

As if in answer to his thoughts, the musical chime of the tall, old-fashioned family clock in

the hall downstairs struck the hour with a measured cadence.

"Midnight, eh!" exclaimed the boy, after counting the strokes. "It's some time since I've been awake at this hour, though I came close to it last night."

Another thud came to the window, this time hard enough to rattle the glass.

"They'd better have that limb sawed off," muttered Eric, "or some time a big wind will push it through the window-pane."

He slipped out of bed and walked over to the window, to see how hard it really was blowing, for he didn't hear the sound anywhere but at that particular window. Looking out he saw something which almost took his breath away. It was the figure of a man slowly making his way toward the window by a hand-over-hand movement toward the tree limb.

It was the weight and swinging movement of his body which made the stout branch strike against the window. The night itself was just as calm as it was when the boy came to bed. Who was this man, and what was his object? The answer instantly suggested itself to the amazed boy.

"I believe he means to break into the house by the only way that leads to the upper story," breathed Eric, his heart thumping against his ribs like a miniature pile-driver. "I guess I'm up against the real thing, after all. Why, there are two of them. How am I going to stand them off? I've got to do it somehow, for that is what I'm here for. It's a question of think quick, for the first rascal is almost up to the window. Ah! The gun! But I haven't time to load it. I must not let them get into this house if I can help it, but your life!"

He pulled down the old musket, and with all the pluck of a brave boy who knew his duty and proposed to do it, he placed himself in the shadow near the window and waited with bated breath for the next move on the programme. It came as soon as the burglar secured foothold on the window-sill. He tried the window, which was shut but not latched. With one hand he gently pushed the upper sash down nearly half-way and stuck his head into the room to reconnoiter the premises. As he did so, Eric trust the muzzle of the ancient firearm under his nose.

"Skip!" he cried, fiercely, "or I'll blow the top of your head off."

The man started back with an oath and almost lost his balance. Gripping the limb tighter to sustain himself, the intruder glared at the boy who now stood revealed in his night garments in the full glow of the moonshine.

"What's the matter, Ringle?" asked the second man, who had just started to follow his companion by the same limb.

The fellow addressed as Ringle didn't answer, but he transferred his hand from the tree-limb to the half-open window, and at the same time, with his other hand, began to fumble at his hip-pocket. Eric guessed he had a revolver there, but he didn't falter from his purpose.

"If you draw any weapon, I'll fire," he said to Ringle, in a tone which seemed to show that he meant business.

"Who are you?" hissed the burglar. "Seems to me I've seen you before."

"It doesn't matter who I am. I'm here to block your attempt to enter this house."

"I know you now," gritted Ringle. "You're Eric Gordon. What are you doing here?"

"Don't you see what I'm doing?" retorted the boy.

"Pshaw! Point that gun another way. It might go off accidentally."

"No, it won't. It will go off on purpose, if it goes off at all. It's up to you to say whether it does or not."

"Look here, young man," said Ringle, fiercely. "If you don't put up that gun and let us into the room, it'll be the death of you at the first chance I get."

"You can't frighten me that way," returned the nervy boy.

"I'll do something worse than frighten you," snarled Ringle. "It'll be the worst night's work you ever did if you interfere with us."

"You don't suppose I'm going to let you in to rob the house and frighten the old ladies who brought me here to guard them, do you?"

"So they brought you back with them, did they? More fool you for coming. Come, now, stand out of the way, or——"

"I'll give you just one minute to go, Mister Man," cried Eric, resolutely. "If you don't. I shall fire, anyhow. I can't take any more chances."

"You wouldn't dare!" growled Ringle, who didn't really believe the lad had the pluck to shoot, but who, at the same time, felt decidedly nervous over the prospect lest he really might carry out his threat.

"Don't you tempt me, that's all," said Eric, jabbing the muzzle of the musket against Ringle's forehead.

The touch of the cold iron was irresistible.

"I'll go," he cried, hoarsely, "but I'll get square with you for this. You're doing us out of a cold \$1,500, and I shan't forget it."

In the meantime his companion, perceiving something was wrong, had returned to his perch in the tree. This left the way clear for Ringle to beat a retreat by the way he had come, and, swearing under his breath like a trooper, he availed himself of the opportunity, much to the courageous boy's relief. Regaining the tree, Ringle held a consultation with his companion, and while he was thus engaged Eric got down the powder-horn and poured a charge into the gun, and then rammed home a wad of paper he had in one of his pockets. This he followed with a bullet.

Then he sprinkled some powder in the nipple, for it was a flint lock, and returned to his post to await further developments, wondering, if it became necessary for him to fire, whether the ancient weapon would go off at all. But the necessity was not forced upon him. Ringle and his associate had arrived at the conclusion that prudence was the better part of valor, and Eric had the satisfaction of seeing them descend from the old oak and disappear around the corner of the building.

Eric knew the doors and lower windows were strongly barricaded, so he didn't fear they would be able to force an entrance that way. No doubt they had tried to do so before they shinned up the tree and had given up the attempt. The boy

hurriedly got into his clothes, pushed up the window again and secured it, and then went downstairs to stand watch in that quarter. But there was no further attempt made on the mansion that night, though Eric stuck faithfully to his task until dawn, when, satisfied that the thieves were really gone, he went to bed again.

CHAPTER VII.—Eric Becomes Aggressive.

The small servant called him about nine o'clock, and he got up and dressed, feeling none the worse for his night's adventure. He did not see the maiden sisters until he entered the breakfast-room half an hour later.

"Well, Eric," said Miss Priscilla, with a smile, "how did you sleep last night?"

"I was awake more than half the night," replied the boy, with a slight grin.

"Indeed," spoke up Miss Phoebe. "That is too bad. Change of surroundings, I presume, must——"

"It wasn't that," answered Eric; "but it happened I had a visitor."

"A visitor!" exclaimed both of the sisters together, raising their hands in surprise. "Why——"

"The fact of the matter is a couple of burglars tried to force an entrance into the house through my room."

"My goodness!" ejaculated Miss Priscilla, turning pale, while her sister looked as if she were going to faint.

"I think it was lucky you put me in that room," went on Eric. "Not only that, but if it hadn't been for that old musket hanging on the wall up there I don't think I could have stood them off. The fellow who got as far as the window was a pretty hard one, and I had to shove the muzzle of the gun in his face to get him to listen to reason."

Then the boy told the maiden ladies the whole story of what he had been up against, winding up by advising them to have that particular limb of the tree cut down, in order to guard against any similar attempts in the future.

"We can never thank you enough, Eric Gordon," said Miss Priscilla, gratefully. "I am sure I don't know what we should have done if you had not been here to protect us."

"I am very glad I was," he replied, earnestly.

"You are certainly a very brave boy," smiled Miss Phoebe.

"I couldn't help acting as I did. I knew you depended on me, and I would have felt like thirty cents if those rascals had got the better of me."

"And weren't you frightened at all?" asked Miss Priscilla, pouring out the coffee from a real old-fashioned silver urn.

"I didn't have time to consider whether I was or not. I knew it was my duty to prevent them getting in."

"But you might have got hurt. I should never have forgiven myself if you had been. We would rather have lost the money, or anything else we have in the house, than that harm should have come to you, when your mother was so good as to let you come here."

"It wouldn't have been your fault if I had been roughly handled, Miss Gardner. Those are

chances we've all got to take when we're up against bad characters."

"We must stop at the constable's on our way to church and tell him about this wicked attempt to break into our home. You will be able to describe the man, won't you, Eric?"

"Sure. I'd know him if I ever saw him again. Do you know, I think I've seen him before. I couldn't say when or where. The other fellow called him Ringle; but that name is not familiar to me."

Breakfast over, the sisters prepared to go to the village church, as was this custom. Eric was to go with them in the buggy and drive. He hitched the horse to the vehicle, brought it around to the front door, where the maiden ladies were waiting, and politely handed them into the buggy. They found Constable Gray on the point of setting out for church with his family in a carryall. Eric briefly gave him an outline of the burglarious attempt on the Gardner homestead the night before, and he promised to give the matter his attention. After dinner, Eric walked over to Sayville to see his mother, and also called upon Will Batterson, to both of whom he related what had occurred at Gardner's.

"Gosh!" grinned his chum, "you had a strenuous time of it, didn't you?"

"It wasn't child's play."

"S'pose that bluff of yours hadn't worked?"

"I should have used the butt end of the old thing to keep the rascal out."

"But s'pose he'd drawn a revolver—what then?"

"I give it up," replied Eric. "He'd had me dead to rights, then."

"Bet your life he would! Maybe those are the same chaps who have been working so many houses along shore of late."

"I wouldn't be surprised. It's funny how they manage to keep under cover so well, with all the constables of the county, you might say, on the lookout after them."

"It is funny. They must be foxy rascals."

"They're pretty slick."

"Say," exclaimed Will, suddenly, "you don't think that black sloop we saw in the creek Friday night has any connection with those chaps, do you?"

"I never thought of such a thing; but, of course, it isn't impossible."

"Did you tell the constable about the vessel?"

"No."

"I think he ought to know. I didn't fancy the look of her."

"I'll see him again to-morrow and mention the fact."

"I would. It won't do any harm, and then, again, it might furnish a clue. I don't believe in letting anything like that get by."

Eric returned to the Gardner homestead at eight o'clock, and an hour later was in bed. He wasn't sure but the burglars might return again, and determined to keep awake as long as possible. His good resolution didn't amount to much, for in fifteen minutes he was as sound asleep as a bell. His slumber, however, was disturbed by strange and disquieting dreams, in all of which the man Ringle figured.

It was one o'clock when he awoke with a start. He had been dreaming that he was passing

through a lonesome wood when Ringle and his two companions suddenly sprang out of a thicket and blocked his passage. Two of them had revolvers in their hands, and the look on Ringle's face was ominous. Then, as we have said, he awoke. The dream had been very real, and for the moment, in the darkness of the room, for the sky was overcast this morning, he wasn't sure but he was still in the wood, and he glanced fearfully around for signs of Ringle and his associates.

"Gee! It was only a dream, after all," he muttered, in a tone of relief.

He heard the pattering of the tree against the window, as the southing wind moved the limbs to and fro, and his first impression was that Ringle was renewing his attempt to enter his room by the giant branch. He sprang out of bed to look, though he heard the sweep of the wind as it rattled the old shutters on the outside.

"It's the wind this time, all right," he said, but for all that he walked over to the glass to make doubly sure.

So dark were the shadows in the old oak that for all he could see to the contrary there might have been a dozen men concealed among its branches. At that moment he heard a slight thud at the other window which overlooked the landscape from another point.

"What's that?"

Then he heard a creaking noise, which he ascribed to the hinges of the shutters. While he was looking toward the window, he fancied he saw a shadow more opaque even than the dark background of the night rise slowly up before the glass. A different sound than that caused by the wind shaking the sashes followed.

"I believe there's some one there," breathed the boy, staring fixedly at the glass.

He dropped down on the floor and crawled over. The nearer view thus obtained disclosed the shadowy outline of a man on the outside.

"The rascals have actually had the nerve to come back. They are working a new dodge. They have a ladder this time. Well I'll give them a warm reception, all right. They won't be able to get in at the window without breaking it, for the latch is caught."

The man on the ladder had found the sashes secure, and drew a small implement from his pocket, the skilful manipulation of which would soon enable him to remove the pane under the catch and allow of the easy insertion of his arm, so that he could unhook it. Eric soon understood what he was about and resolved to let him proceed while he took advantage of the circumstances to hurriedly dress himself. Before going to the room the evening before, he had hunted up a good, stout cudgel, with a heavy knot on the end, which he considered a much more effective weapon than the ancient musket, for he had his doubts as to the advisability of firing off the charge he had put into it—it might prove more disastrous to himself than to the person for whom its contents were intended. Armed with the cudgel, Eric drew near to the window just as the man outside had effected his purpose, and the pane of glass fell on the carpet. The rascal unhooked the clasp and softly lifted the lower sash.

The way was now clear for him to enter. He did not do so at once, but thrust in his head to see what he could make out in the dark chamber. He had cause to regret the act the moment his head was well in the room, for Eric, whom he did not observe, had been patiently waiting for this chance which he had foreseen would probably occur. The boy had been holding the club poised in readiness to deal an effective blow. He brought the cudgel squarely down on the rascal's head. With a groan the fellow dropped backward and tumbled down the ladder, landing in a heap on the ground.

CHAPTER VIII.—Waylaid.

Eric glanced cautiously out of the window to see what would follow. Two very much surprised rascals were lifting their unfortunate companion to his feet. The man, however, was senseless, and when this fact became apparent to the others they bore him away to the old well in one corner of the yard to revive him. Eric watched them go.

"So there are three of them this time? I wonder what they'll do next?"

He looked at the ladder and then an idea struck him.

"I may as well remove this out of their reach while they are away," he said.

He hauled the ladder up, tipped it and dragged it into the room, leaving a small portion of it extending beyond the sill.

"When they come back to try again, they'll wonder where it has gone to," he snickered, picturing their surprise in his mind.

Fifteen minutes later he saw them return. The man who had received the tumble looked decidedly groggy on his legs. As Eric had judged, they were astonished at the disappearance of the ladder. The circumstances disconcerted them. They could not but understand that the surprise they had contemplated had proved a miserable failure. They consulted together for a few minutes, and then moved off in the direction of the barn.

"Have they given their project up, or got some new scheme in their heads?" muttered the boy, as he watched them vanish in the gloom of the yard.

He divided his attention between the two windows and waited. For some time nothing occurred, and Eric was almost persuaded that they had withdrawn, when he saw a flickering light in the direction of the barn. Even as he looked this light grew larger and brighter until a strong premonition of mischief forced itself on the lad's mind.

"I really believe they have set fire to the barn," he said, with some concern.

Such presently proved to be the fact. In revenge for their second defeat, the rascals had fired the flimsy building. Eric rushed from the room and aroused the maiden sisters. He explained the situation in a few words, and then hastened downstairs.

"Look out!" screamed Miss Priscilla; "they may be standing outside waiting for you to open the door."

Eric had not thought of that, and he paused with his hand on the bolt. But his humane sympathies for the poor horse, which he believed to have been left to meet an awful fate, overcame every other consideration, and he drew the bolts and rushed out into the night. No one was there to meet him or to take advantage of the open door. He dashed for the stable at a run. Then he saw a moving object on his right. A burst of flame from one of the stable windows showed him that it was the horse which the rascals at least had the charity to turn loose before they proceeded with their unlawful design. The barn, however, was doomed, and ere many minutes the fire burst through the roof, lighting up the landscape so that it could be seen miles away.

Somebody in the village saw the flames and telephoned word to Manhasset. The volunteer firemen were aroused and started down the road with the engine, believing some farmhouse was burning. They arrived at the Gardner homestead in time to view a heap of glowing embers and obtain an account of the cause of the brief conflagration.

There was nothing for them to do, so they trailed back the way they came. Eric kept watch for an hour longer, and then, satisfied that the burglars had no intention of making a further attempt on the mansion, turned in and slept like a top until called down to breakfast. During the meal, both of the sisters feelingly expressed their gratitude to the boy for his courageous defense of their property and their persons.

"You are one boy in a thousand, Eric Gordon," said Miss Priscilla, with a smile. "Few lads would have had the nerve to stand out against three such desperate rascals. I am sure I don't know what we should have done without you in the house."

"It's a wonder you were never molested by the tramps and scalawags who seem always to be on the lookout for unprotected property."

"It is a wonder," replied the maiden lady, with a little shiver. "But we did not give the matter the thought we have of late. I am so thankful we asked your mother to permit you to stay with us these two nights."

After breakfast, as Eric was preparing to take his departure for home, as it was necessary for him to go for the early mail, Miss Priscilla called him into the cozy little sitting-room.

"It is the wish of my sister and myself to show you in some substantial way our appreciation of the service you have rendered us. We feel that you have not only saved us a considerable sum of money, but in all likelihood the family plate and jewels as well, the loss of which would be a dreadful blow to us. They have been in the family for over one hundred years, and you will understand that many memories center about them. I, therefore, take great pleasure in presenting you with the sum of \$1,000 as a nest-egg for your future."

Eric was much astonished at this liberal present from the sisters, and did not want to accept to, until Miss Priscilla insisted that he do so, or they would feel greatly hurt. He thanked them courteously for the gift, and soon afterward took his leave. Of course, Mrs. Gordon was very much astonished also when Eric showed her the

wad of bankbills Miss Priscilla had presented him with.

"What are you going to do with all that money, my son?" she asked, smilingly.

"I have already three hundred dollars in the Manhasset Savings Bank, mother, and this will go to keep that company."

After leaving the mail-bag in the Manhasset post-office and getting the one he had to bring back to Sayville, he went to his bank and duly deposited the money.

"I feel like a bloated capitalist," he said to himself, as he looked at the balance now to his credit, with a glow of satisfaction.

Then he went on to the village. At five o'clock he was back in Manhasset again. After getting the afternoon mail-bag, he had to go on to Saugatuck, a small village several miles beyond, to leave several bags of phosphate, which he had been commissioned to deliver by a merchant in Manhasset. It was late, therefore, when he finally passed through town again and struck out for home.

The shades of an early summer evening were falling upon the country landscape when Eric Gordon reached the most lonesome stretch of his homeward drive. The covered vehicle was proceeding at a smart pace when two men jumped out of a thicket and essayed to stop it, while a third man, not so big nor so old as the others, rose out of the bushes on the other side of the road, with a pistol in his hand. It seemed to be a clear case of hold-up.

"Grab her by the bridle, Brady," said the man who appeared to be the leader of the enterprise.

While Brady attempted to follow instructions, the other man, who looked strangely like Ringle, the burglar, drew a revolver from his hip-pocket for the purpose of intimidating the young driver of the wagon. Eric, taking in the situation at a glance, whipped up his horse. Then he leaned forward and struck at the two men. Brady sprang back to avoid being run down, throwing up his arm to avoid the whip-lash. Thus he lost the only chance he had had to stop the mare.

At the same moment the fellow among the bushes fired, and the ball severed a small lock of Eric's hair on his forehead. As the wagon dashed by the men, the leader fired after it. But the shot amounted to nothing, and in a cloud of dust Eric and his covered conveyance disappeared around the turn of the road, leaving the discomfited rascals swearing and otherwise forcibly expressing the vexation they felt over the miscarriage of their ambushade.

CHAPTER IX.—The Stubbornness of Clarence Chudleigh.

Next morning when Eric went to Manhasset he overheard the postmaster and one of the town officials talking about a fresh robbery which had occurred in the town the night before. Quite a lot of silverware and jewels had been taken by the robbers, and no clew to their identity was forthcoming. Eric then told about the attack made upon him in the mail-wagon the previous evening on the country road.

"I am satisfied they are the same fellows who tried to break into the Gardner homestead on the two nights I slept there," he said, in conclusion.

"These rascals, whoever they are, seem to be getting mighty bold," said the postmaster, wagging his bald head and looking at Eric over his glasses. "Where they keep themselves under cover during the daytime is what puzzles me."

"Have you heard of a black sloop being seen in this neighborhood lately?" inquired the boy.

"A black sloop?"

"Yes. A kind of single-masted craft, painted a dead black color."

"No," said the postmaster, shaking his head. "But there ought to be many such vessels about, I should think. Black isn't such an unusual color for boats."

"That's right, too; but I refer to a craft which might have an object in keeping aloof among the creeks and inlets of the north shore. These burglars could live aboard such a vessel and thus keep out of sight of the officers searching for them."

"Your idea seems a plausible one," said the postmaster, looking interested. "What put it into your head?"

"Why, Will Batterson, a friend of mine, and myself ran foul of just such a craft last Friday night at anchor up in East Creek. We thought nothing of the circumstance at the time, except that it seemed an odd place for her to be; but since we've been reading about the many mysterious burglaries in this neighborhood, and the fact that the perpetrators of them have managed to cover up their movements so cleverly, we thought——"

"Do you know if the vessel is still there?" asked the town official, who had been an interested listener to the foregoing.

"Really, I couldn't say, as I haven't been near the creek since the night in question."

"It's worth looking into, anyway," said the official. "I'll call at the head constable's office and mention the fact. We want to get these rascals if we can, and no clew ought to be overlooked in the search."

With these words he left the post-office.

"What's the matter with the mail this morning, Mr. Richards?" asked Eric.

"There was a smash-up about twelve miles down the road, and the train has been held up just beyond Smithtown for the last two hours."

"You haven't any idea when she'll get through, I suppose?"

"No; but I should think she ought to be along pretty soon. Here's a book for you to look at while you're waiting," and he tossed Eric a small, red-bound volume, the title of which, "The Art of Getting Rich," immediately interested the boy.

"I wouldn't mind picking up a few points on this subject," mused Eric, as he turned the pages over; "I should think such a book ought to be popular, as everybody has a weakness for acquiring wealth. It is a very comfortable reflection to have a bank account of some size," and Eric thought of his \$1,300 in the Manhasset Savings Bank.

Eric found that there were nine chapters in the little work of which the first was devoted to "How Fortunes Were Made in Ancient Times." The fourth chapter was headed "How to Succeed in Business," and Eric thought he'd better

that. He was about half-way through this interesting subject when the mail was brought into the office.

The small bundle of letters and the larger batch of newspapers and packages for Sayville and vicinity were tossed into a bag, and the pouch handed over to Eric, who at once took his departure for home. That afternoon Will Batterson accompanied Eric on his afternoon trip for the mail. He brought along his shotgun, which he had loaded with buckshot, and when, on his return trip, they drew near the scene of the previous night's hold-up, Will kept out of sight with the gun in readiness to take a hand in the proceedings if Eric was molested again; but nothing occurred to interrupt the mail-wagon.

"I guess those chaps won't bother you again," said Will, when he resumed his seat beside his chum.

"Probably not; but if you had been with me last night we might have peppered them with a few chunks of lead. I had a lucky escape from the pistol-ball of one of them."

"That's what you had. They seem to be a desperate bad lot."

As they turned a curve in the road they made out a light buggy approaching in the middle of the road.

"Here comes Clarence," said Will. "He's got it in for you because you beat him out in the boat-race."

"He had as good a chance to win as I had, but he threw it away by over-exerting himself at the start. I don't see how he can blame me for his own foolishness."

"That's his way—always unreasonable. He ought to take a tumble to himself once in a while."

Eric turned out so as to give Chudleigh half of the road, but Clarence made no move to do likewise.

"Hi, there, Clarence, give us room to pass, will you?" shouted Will, with a gesture.

"Turn out yourself!" retorted Chudleigh, in no very pleasant tone.

"We have turned out our share," answered Will.

"Turn out more, then!" came back the sulky reply.

"Now what do you think of that?" said Will to Eric. "Isn't it enough to make you mad? Look here, Chudleigh, do you think you own this road?"

Clarence, however, made no answer. He had come to a stop exactly in the center of the turn-pike, and it looked as if he didn't intend to yield an inch. It was manifestly impossible for Eric to pass him without ditching his off wheels and scraping the fence. The rules of the road entitled him to a fair half of the way, and he decided not to waive his rights even to oblige so important a little gentleman as Clarence Chudleigh.

However, he did not mean to run the little aristocrat down because he was unreasonable, that is, not if he could help himself. A collision between the stout mail wagon and the light buggy would have been greatly to the disadvantage of the latter. So when the two rigs came pretty close he slowed down and finally stopped and waited for Clarence to do something.

"We're waiting for you to get out of the way," said Eric, with becoming mildness.

"Do you suppose I'm going to turn out for a common store boy like you?" said Chudleigh, contemptuously.

"Don't act like a puppy!" chipped in Will, somewhat indignant at this gratuitous insult to his chum. "We have the right of half of this road, and you're only making a donkey of yourself by disputing it."

"Do you mean to insult me?" demanded Clarence, firing up at Will's words.

"Don't be a clam!" retorted Batterson, in some disgust at the young dude's perverseness.

"Do you expect to keep to the middle of the road?" asked Eric, impatiently.

"I shall if I feel like it."

"If he doesn't take the cake for pure cussedness when he's got his back up you can call me a liar," remarked Will to his friend, in a low voice.

"I suppose you are aware that I am carrying the mail?" asked Eric, taking a new tack.

"I don't care what you're carrying. I've got the right of way, and I'm going to keep it."

"You have no more right than we have to hold the center of the road and block another vehicle. You ought to know that, for your father is a lawyer," said Will.

"How do you expect to pass?" asked Eric, rather tired of the discussion.

"It's your place to turn out more," replied Clarence, sourly.

"I can't turn out any more without running my right wheels into the ditch. It isn't fair for you to expect me to do that. You have lots of room on your own right to drive and allow me my fair share of the road."

"I don't want to talk with you."

"Turn out, then, and let us pass you."

"I shan't," answered Clarence, doggedly.

"What do you want to be so obstinate for?" snorted Will.

"That's my business."

"Very well," said Eric, in a decided tone. "I'm going to drive on. It's up to you if anything happens to your rig."

"Don't you dare strike my buggy!" screamed Clarence, when he saw Eric start ahead.

"Get out of the way, then," said Will. "You're detaining the mail, and that's against the law."

But Chudleigh persisted in staying where he was, though he had ample room to move to one side. The result was the front wheel of the big wagon locked with his front wheel, and as Eric continued to go ahead the buggy was slewed around, while the horse, seeing his danger, started to pull out of the way. The light vehicle couldn't stand the strain, and, as a natural result, the axle snapped and the wheel came off, pitching Clarence into the road, where he would have been run over but that Eric suddenly pulled short up. Will jumped out and yanked the dazed aristocrat out of harm's way.

"I'll make you pay for this!" cried Chudleigh, scrambling to his feet, white with rage, and shaking his gloved hand at Eric.

"I don't think you will," replied Will, calmly. "I'm a witness against you. I will testify that you acted unreasonably in this matter."

"Shut up, Will Batterson! You've got too much to say!" snarled Clarence, dusting off his clothes.

"My father will make you sweat for this," he added, glowering at Eric, who did not seem to be in the least disturbed by the threat.

"I'm sorry," he answered; "but it was your own fault."

"Yah! You common store boy!"

"What are you going to do now?" asked Will. "With your wheel off and the axle snapped short in two, you can't go on."

"We'll have to patch it up so he can lead the rig home again," said Eric.

"You won't patch nothing up!" shouted Clarence, dancing about in the road with passion. "You'll pay the bill for fixing it up as good as new. Do you hear, you loafer!"

"That settles it," said Eric, with some indignation. "Jump in, Will; I'm going to drive on."

And drive on he did, as soon as Batterson climbed back into his seat, leaving Clarence hopping about in the dust, like a monkey on a hot stove, and threatening Eric with every dire result in the calendar.

CHAPTER X.—Squire Chudleigh Suffers a Loss.

An hour later, Clarence led his horse and trailing buggy into the yard of his home, and the gardener, who was watering the lawn with a hose, wanted to know what had happened to him.

"That beast of an Eric Gordon, the store boy, ran into me with his heavy wagon and broke the front axle of the buggy. But I'll make him pay well for it, the loafer!" said Clarence, with smothered anger.

"He must have been very careless," remarked the man, who, knowing nothing of the merits of the case, naturally sided with his employer's son.

"He did it on purpose!" snorted young Chudleigh.

"You ought to inform your father about it."

"I mean to. Has he got home?"

"Yes. I saw him come in half an hour ago."

Clarence found his father in the library and gave him his own version of the "outrage." On the strength of his son's statement, the lawyer grew quite indignant.

"I will walk down to the store after supper and talk to him about it. I shall expect him to apologize to you, and pay for having the buggy repaired."

"That's right," responded his son, in a tone of satisfaction. "Give him fits. He puts on altogether too many airs because he carries the mail. You had his mother appointed postmistress, didn't you, father?"

"Ahem! Yes. I recommended the appointment."

"I wish somebody else had it."

"Why, my son?"

"Because, then, Eric Gordon would have to do something beside driving his wagon to town twice a day. I hate him."

"You mustn't express yourself in such an un-Christian-like way, my son," said the squire, reprovingly.

"Why not?" asked Clarence, ungraciously.

"Because it isn't—ahem!—just right."

"I might as well say it as I think it. I should have won that dollar prize last Saturday only for him."

"Mr. Brown told me at meeting that young Gordon won the race fairly."

"I sprained my shoulder-blade."

"That was your misfortune, so we won't discuss the matter further."

"You said you'd make the ten dollars up to me."

"So I did. There it is," and the squire took a bill from a well-filled wallet and handed it to his son and heir.

Clarence took it with a grin of pleasure, but forgot to thank his father for the donation. As this was nothing unusual on his part, the omission escaped his parent's notice. The squire called at the store about seven o'clock, as he promised his son. Eric was waiting on a customer at the time, and his mother was similarly engaged, so the great man of the village had to wait his turn. A sandy-complexioned man entered the store while he stood there. In a few minutes Mrs. Gordon was at liberty and came forward.

"I have a little business with your son," said the squire, in response to her respectful request as to what he wished. "While I am waiting, I may as well pay your last week's bill. Have you got it ready?"

"Yes, sir," replied the postmistress.

Squire Chudleigh produced his wallet, and the sandy-complexioned man eyed it with greedy interest. The nabob, having ascertained the amount he owed for groceries, pulled out several notes and tendered them in payment, while the lady was receipting the bill. He laid his wallet on the counter just as Eric came forward to wait on the sandy-complexioned man.

"One moment, please," said the squire, turning to the boy. "My son has made a very serious charge against you, young man."

"I suppose you refer to the injury his buggy sustained on the country road late this afternoon," replied Eric, respectfully.

"Precisely. If you have any explanation to make in reference to it I will listen to that."

"Here is your bill, Squire Chudleigh," said Mrs. Gordon at this point, putting it down near the pocketbook.

"Thank you, ma'am," answered the great man, without turning around.

"I'll take half a pound of plug cut, madam," said the sandy-featured customer, as the postmistress looked at him inquiringly.

While she went to the back of the store to get the tobacco, the man edged up nearer the counter and the spot where the squire stood. When Mrs. Gordon returned and handed him the package, he was putting something into his hip-pocket. He paid for the tobacco and hurried from the store. In the meantime Eric had made his explanation of the road accident, and referred to Will Batterson as to the truthfulness of his statement. The squire was obliged to admit that his son had been in the wrong, and he left the store rather provoked with Clarence.

"Mother," said Eric, a few moments later, "Squire Chudleigh forgot his receipt. I'll put it in an envelope and stick it in his pigeon-hole."

He was in the act of doing this when the lawyer re-entered the store in a great hurry and apparently much exercised over something.

"I forgot my——"

"Your receipt," interrupted Eric. "Here it is."

"I refer to my pocketbook. I left it on the counter."

"On the counter!" replied Eric, looking. "Whereabouts?"

"There," answered the nabob. "What did you do with it?"

"I didn't see it, squire."

"Didn't see it? You must have seen it!" exclaimed the great man, angrily. "There was more than one hundred dollars in it, and several valuable papers."

"But I assure you that I did not," protested Eric, flushing.

"Then where has it gone?"

"You must have put it back in your pocket."

"It is not in my pocket. I forgot to pick it up."

"Mother!" called Eric. "Did you see the squire's pocketbook?"

"Why, no," she replied, coming forward.

"Maybe it fell down somewhere behind those boxes," said the boy, removing them hastily, but to no purpose.

There was no sign of the lawyer's wallet anywhere. Of course its absence produced an embarrassing situation, especially as the nabob almost openly accused Eric of having taken it. The entrance of Constable Gray put another complexion on the affair. After he had listened to the lawyer's story and asked him to describe the wallet, he said he had seen a sandy-complexioned man, a stranger in the village, examining just such a pocketbook a little while before, down near the river. Mother and son recollected that this man had been in the store while the squire was there, and as he left in a great hurry the inference was plain.

"I'll see if I can catch him," said Eric, seizing his hat. "You said down by the river, didn't you, Mr. Gray?"

"Yes. I'll go along with you."

They both hastened in the direction indicated.

"There he is in that black boat!" cried Eric, pointing down the river, where the man was pulling at all his speed. "He's the thief, sure enough; but how are we to catch him?"

CHAPTER XI.—Under Hatches.

"If we had a horse and buggy," suggested the constable.

"Or a boat," said Eric. "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll get Batterson's."

"Where shall we find it? Every moment counts."

"It's always tied to the little bathing stage behind his house. We won't lose any time, because it's in the same direction as we want to go."

The constable knew that, and off they started on a trot for the Batterson home, the back of which fronted on the river.

"Is Will at home?" asked Eric of the servant who was taking in clothes from the lines in the yard.

"No," she replied. "He went out after supper."

"Well, tell him Constable Gray and I have

taken his boat to chase a robber, will you?" and he hurried on, joining the constable at the bathing stage.

"I'm afraid we'll lose the fellow in the dark," said the village official, as he pointed down the river where the fleeing thief was growing indistinct in the gathering dust.

"We must put on steam and try to overhaul him. He can't know that any one is in chase of him."

They embarked in short order, after Eric had brought out two pairs of oars from a small out-house where they were kept.

"Now, then, Mr. Gray," said Eric, resolutely, as he removed and tossed his jacket aside, "we must get a move on if you expect to catch that scamp and put him into the lock-up to-night."

They got down to work with a will, and the light skiff flew over the water like a sea bird. Darkness settled down on the landscape, the banks of the river gradually grew indistinct, so they could not judge the position of the fugitive. They pulled away like good fellows till the perspiration oozed down their faces, for the night was a warm one. They had proceeded more than a mile when they heard the sound of oars ahead.

"There he is!" cried Eric, beginning to spurt.

"Yes, it must be. I was beginning to fear that the rascal had landed somewhere along the bank, leaving us on a wild-goose chase," replied Constable Gray, increasing his stroke to match the boy's.

The sound of oars in advance grew more and more distinct.

"We'll have the rascal soon. I wonder where he's heading for?"

This question was soon answered, for a bend in the stream brought them in sight of a one-masted vessel silhouetted against a whitewashed barn standing near the river bank. The sound of the oars had ceased, but there seemed to be two or three persons in motion between the barn and the boat.

"He's gone aboard that sloop. I'll wager," said the constable, who had paused to look ahead.

At the word sloop, Eric stopped, too, and looked in the same direction.

"Why, that's the black sloop!" he exclaimed, in some excitement.

"The one you spoke to me about?" asked Mr. Gray.

"Yes. It must be the same. They have brought it up the river, evidently."

"Well, I'm going to board it," said the constable, resolutely. "It's my opinion we've struck the nest of burglars who have been giving the county such a scare."

"That's what I——"

The shrill scream of a woman or girl at that moment awoke the echoes of the quiet spot.

"There's something wrong, you may depend!" cried the officer. "We've got here at the right moment to be useful, probably. There's a lantern. They seem to be taking somebody on board."

A few more lusty strokes and their skiff bumped again at the side of the black sloop. Unshipping the oars, Constable Gray, closely followed by Eric, sprang aboard the low-lying craft. In the glimmering light of the lantern held by the sandy-complexioned man, they saw two other

one of whom Eric recognized as Ringle, the other as the youngish fellow who had fired at him from the bushes the previous night, dragging a muffled-up and struggling female over the sloop's side.

"Hello! What does this mean?" exclaimed the constable, in his official tones.

His challenge created an immediate sensation in the ranks of the opposition, who had not been aware of the approach of strangers on the scene. Ringle stared at the constable in a startled way for a moment and then uttered an imprecation. At the same moment the sandy-featured man, whose name was Brady, the very rascal who had failed to stop the mare the evening before, recognized Eric.

"It's young Gordon and the village cop!" he cried, warningly. "We must do 'em or the jig is up!"

Constable Gray heard the words, and they removed all doubt as to the character of the men he had to deal with. He was a plucky fellow, and advancing upon Ringle he said:

"I arrest all. Surrender, or I'll put a bullet into each of you."

"The dickens you will!" ejaculated Ringle, grabbing the constable's wrist as he was in the act of drawing his weapon. "Grab the boy, Brady, I'll attend to this man!"

Brady dropped the lantern and rushed at Eric, who met him with a blow which sent him staggering backward. But the sandy-haired individual was a tough nut, and he soon closed with Eric. While they were struggling, and Ringle was making things interesting for the officer, the other rascal carried the girl he held into the cabin and slammed the slide to, effectually imprisoning her. Then, as if he knew just what had to be done in such an emergency, he cast off the rope which held the sloop to the bank, and, seizing the main-sheet, began to haul the already loosened mainsail up toward the peak of the mast, when the night wind, catching its folds, flung the boom to port, knocking over the four combatants in the cockpit.

Ringle, who was much more active than the stout constable, sprang up first, and taking advantage of the latter's discomfiture, seized him by the coat and one leg, and, before the officer knew where he was, tumbled him into the river. The sloop swept by, leaving Constable Gray struggling in the water. Ringle then came to Brady's assistance who was having all he could do to handle the intrepid boy, and between them they overpowered Eric, and bound him securely with a bit of rope. By this time the third rascal had trimmed the sail and taken his place at the helm, the boat gliding down the river as if on greased ways.

"So we've got hold of you at last, you little monkey, have we?" said Ringle, picking up the lantern and flashing the light in the boy's face.

Eric made no reply, but returned the fellow's look defiantly.

"You're the chap that did us out of a nice haul the other night and almost broke Jim Brady's head into the bargain. We've been aching to get back at you for it, and I guess the chance has come our way at last."

"Yes, blame you!" chipped in the sandy-featured man, "I owe you one for that clip you gave me on the nut, and I always pay my debts."

He shook his fist in Eric's face and swore a round oath.

"We'll attend to his case later," said Ringle. "Help me put him under hatches."

They carried the boy forward. Ringle removed the hatch cover, exposing a small, dark hole, and thrust Eric down into the place. The lid was then replaced and secured with a hasp, and the boy left to ruminate over the uncertainties of this mundane sphere.

After a while Eric heard the men talking on deck, and from their conversation Eric learned that the villain Ringle was Andrew Wales's nephew, and that they had Andrew's daughter, Grace Wales, a prisoner on board the sloop. The boy's heart sank as he learned this. He also learned they were the burglars who had committed the robberies in the neighborhood, and they expected to raise a large sum of money, enough in fact, to enable them to buy an island in the bay, which had a large amount of granite on it, so Ringle stated. He said he had attended the Columbia College School of Mines and had discovered the vein of granite on the island. A man known as Captain Batch was the owner of the island.

That was the last that Eric learned, as the men went away to attend to the course of the vessel.

CHAPTER XII.—Eric Communicates With Grace.

"By Jove!" said Eric to himself, "that Ringle is a smart rascal. It's funny how clever men will turn their talents in the wrong direction. So Batch's Island is a mass of granite? I wonder if that is really true, or is Ringle mistaken? If it is it's the greatest find in this locality that I know of. I'd like to get a chance to verify it. Yet what good would that do me? I could put Ringle's nose out of joint by having him pulled in, no matter what disguise he assumed, but I couldn't buy the island myself, for three thousand is more money than I expect to own for many a day yet. Nobody but Ringle seems to want the island just now, and the only reason he wants it is because he thinks there is a fortune there, which is undoubtedly true if granite really exists there in a considerable quantity. It's funny nobody has made the discovery before. Probably because the island is but rarely visited, and not then by any one with the knowledge and sharp eyes necessary to detect its real composition. I mean to look into it when I get away from this predicament. And you can bet I'm not going to be carried to New York, or allow these rascals to take Grace there, either, if I can help myself. I dare say they imagine because I'm only a boy that I'm easy. I hope they do. It will require some strategy to get to the windward of them. At any rate, it is my motto to stick a thing out till I win. Nothing is gained by crying over spilled milk. It's pure grit that wins, and I'm going to match that against the odds I have to face."

Eric was a plucky boy, all right. The first thing he did was to try and free his hands. Unless this was accomplished he felt that he was helpless. The sudden heeling over of the sloop to port under

A BOY WITH GRIT

the influence of the smart breeze which blew upon the Sound clearly indicated to Eric that the boat had just passed the point where the ruins of the lighthouse lay a mass of blackened debris. The sloop maintained that angle now with her big mainsail bellied out over the water to leeward, and the boy could hear the water dash against her forefoot and feel the slight, graceful bob she made to the Sound wavelets. Half an hour of patient, persistent effort rewarded the boy with the freedom of his hands. He now investigated the interior of his prison and found a small cook stove standing in a sandy base-box. Pots and pans, only roughly cleaned, were hung about on nails. The strong odor of fried fish and grease was now less perceptible to the lad, because he had got used to it.

"I wonder if I could get the best of that hasp which holds down the hatch cover with the help of this skewer?" thought Eric, as soon as his fingers recognized the slender steel implement used by butchers to pierce meat for the insertion of a string to keep it in shape.

Eric didn't lose any time dreaming over the matter, but began operations on the hasp at once. He found the job so easy of accomplishment that he actually laughed over it. Then he lifted the cover a few inches and reconnoitered. The three rascals were seated in a bunch in the cockpit, Ringle steering. It was a fine, starlight night, and the cool breeze was a grateful relief to the boy. It instilled fresh life and confidence in him. He was now prepared to do and dare anything that would aid Grace and himself to escape from their unpleasant surroundings. How such a happy issue was to be brought about was not yet very plain to the brave young fellow. The sobbing sound from the cabin had long since ceased. The dark interior was as silent as though it had no occupant. It was scarcely probable the girl was asleep. More likely she was simply suffering in silence. At length Eric decided to try and attract her attention so as to let her know she had a protector at hand on whom she might rely to do all that was in his power for her benefit.

"The flapping of the mainsail and the dashing water will prevent a slight noise from reaching Ringle and his associates at the stern," thought the boy, "particularly as the cabin slide is shut."

So he began to knock against the wooden bulkhead in a noticeable way. Then he called out, softly:

"Grace! Grace! It is I—Eric Gordon!"

In a moment or two he heard a movement in the cabin as if the girl had stirred.

"Grace Wales! Eric Gordon is here!" he called once more.

"Oh, Eric! where are you?" cried Grace, with a suppressed scream.

"Here," and the boy pounded a bit louder on the bulkhead.

He heard her feeling her way toward his prison pen. Then he pulled a match from his vest pocket and lit it, the flash of the flame shining through the cracks in the partitions, thus indicating his position to her.

"Come close to the bulkhead, Grace."

She did so.

"Wait a moment till I take a look on deck," he said, lifting the cover and surveying the condition outside, which had not changed.

"How came you to be on this boat?" she asked, when the boy let the hatch cover down again and spoke to her.

Eric told her how he and Constable Gray had chased the thief of Squire Chudleigh's wallet down the river from Sayville; how they had boarded the black sloop; how they had seen her carried forcibly on board, and how they had been overpowered in the attempt to capture the rascals—the constable being thrown overboard, while he had been bound and imprisoned.

"But I've worked my hands free and slipped the hasp which secured the lid of this hole, and now I'm ready to take advantage of the first chance to escape and take you back with me."

"Oh, Eric, how brave you are!" cried the girl, with a little hysterical sob.

"Pooh! I haven't done anything very remarkable in that line yet," he replied, pleased, nevertheless, by the girl's compliment.

"You'll never be able to help me against those three men!" she cried. "How can you?"

"I mean to try, Grace. I shall never desert you."

"You're so good. I shall never forget you."

"Not until you find somebody you like better, I suppose."

"I shall never like anybody better than you, Eric!" she cried, impulsively.

"I hope you won't, because I like you better than any girl I ever knew."

"I'm so glad. But you mustn't get into any more trouble for me, Eric. I should be dreadfully unhappy if anything happened to you. Do try and escape, yourself. Then you can tell my father that Edward Ringle has carried me off. Edward is my cousin. He is a very wicked man, I am sure now, and he is doing this to hurt my father. Father was away when he came this evening to our home with another man, and compelled me to go with them. They brought me aboard this boat, as you know."

"Ringle is a hard case, all right. He and his associates set the lighthouse on fire. I heard the sandy-featured man say so a little while ago."

"We suspected that he did," replied the girl.

"Wait till I take another look," interrupted Eric. "I don't want those fellows to catch on to us."

"Hush!" cried Grace, warningly. "Some one is at the slide door of this cabin."

Eric listened and heard the slide drawn back and then saw the flash of the lantern. It was Ringle who was entering the cabin, and Brady was at his heels. Grace had thrown herself face down on the cushioned locker in front of the bulkhead and never moved when Ringle addressed her.

"I guess she's cried herself asleep," he remarked.

"So much the better," replied Brady.

The sloop had a centerboard-trunk to which were attached flaps which answered the purposes of a couple of narrow tables. Ringle turned up one of these and braced it. Then he produced a big black bottle and three tumblers from a locker, poured a portion of liquor into each, and handed one of the glasses out to Poole at the helm. The two men talked and drank a while, after which Ringle got out a box of cigars, selected three, which he distributed, and then he and Brady returned on deck, leaving the slide open.

peered at them over the cabin roof and saw that they were enjoying a smoke. He heard Grace whispering through a crack in the bulkhead.

"Well, Grace," he whispered back.

"They have left the slide open, Eric. We must be careful."

"All right. No use saying anything more. You watch and wait. Be on the alert for any signal from me."

"Do be careful, Eric," she pleaded.

"Don't worry. I'll look out for Number One. You'd better pretend that you are asleep."

Nothing more was said between them. Eric kept an eye on the enemy from under the hatch cover, which he raised a few inches. At length Ringle tossed the butt of his cigar overboard and rose to his feet.

"We'll turn in a spell," he said to Brady. "You can lie down on the starboard locker, I'll take the port one. If the girl is asleep we'll let her lie where she is. No danger of her leaving the cabin without Poole seeing her, and if she did she couldn't run away. It's a pretty good swim from here to shore," and he laughed coarsely.

"And the boy is safe enough for'ard," grinned Brady. "No fear of him getting away."

"I guess not. We'll hocus him and the girl before we reach the city, and then take them in a carriage to Mother Meiggs'."

Eric saw Ringle and the sandy-featured man enter the cabin. Then his fertile brain evolved a daring expedient. It was both bold and desperate, but it seemed to be a case of nothing ventured nothing win, and that warranted any risk which promised results if successful.

CHAPTER XIII.—Pure Grit.

Eric waited a good half hour before he made a move. He wanted to give Ringle and Brady plenty of time to fall asleep. His plan of operations was, first of all, to overpower Poole, who, though paler and older, was lighter and apparently less muscular than himself. But to accomplish this successfully, as well as prevent any alarm reaching Ringle and Brady through the cabin door, he knew he must take Poole off his guard. This was a ticklish job, because the helmsman was, most of the time, looking in the direction he would have to approach. Occasionally Poole looked across the waters of the Sound, it is true, but his attention was not distracted long enough to enable Eric to come across the top of the cabin and pounce upon him unobserved.

Eric watched him fully twenty minutes, hoping some object astern might catch his notice, but nothing like that occurred. The boy began to grow desperate. Time was passing, and if anything was to be accomplished, he felt it had to be done before Ringle and Brady came on deck, for he was almost certain they would both come out at the same time.

"I can't see how I'm going to manage it for the life of me," he muttered impatiently. "Those snobs in the cabin I'll wager are light sleepers—men who probably train themselves to that point when on business. A struggle of any kind would bring them out, and then my name would be mud for good, and Grace, too, would be in the soup. This is hard luck!"

Suddenly a scheme darted through his mind. Its very originality and venturesomeness almost took his breath for the moment; but therein lay its promise of success.

"I'll do it, though I'm liable to lose my life, for it's awful risky. But it's the only way as far as I can see."

Without giving the thought time to cool, he lifted up the hatch cover and cautiously crawled up onto the slanting deck, in the shadow cast by the big mainsail, at a moment when Poole looked off to the leeward at a foreign brig, which was sailing to the eastward. Then, with a prayer for the success of his precarious venture, Eric lowered himself over into the dashing water until half his body was submerged, and then the other half instantly soaked by the spray churned up by the sloop's progress through the water. Slowly he began to drag himself along the starboard side of the boat, which was tilted up at an acute angle, the port rail almost kissing the surface of the water under the pressure of the mainsail, which bulge to leeward.

He had to depend entirely on the grip of his fingers upon the slippery rail as he slowly and laboriously worked himself along toward the cockpit, astern. His idea was to get behind Poole, then, with a sudden spring, for he was as agile as a monkey, leap on board again and jump on the young rascal before he could understand what was in the wind, and then choke him into insensibility.

To plan an enterprise is one thing; to accomplish it another. As he made his way, inch by inch, along the outside of the rushing sloop, the perspiration stood out on his forehead and ran down his face, for there wasn't a moment when he wasn't in imminent danger of being swept from his hold and carried to his death, astern. As he passed at last under the stern of the sloop, the end of his perilous journey in sight, he could not see Poole any more than Poole could see him. Now he rested for his final effort, allowing his limbs to drag in the wake of the boat. Then he raised himself by his arms to see which way the helmsman was looking. His attention was taken up by the seaward-bound brig to leeward. It was a crucial moment.

Summoning all of his energy, Eric hauled himself out of the water, raised his right leg over the rail, and sprang into the cockpit, like some monster which had come out of the deep. Poole turned with a startled oath on his lips, only to find himself clutched around the throat by a strangle hold, while Eric threw the whole weight of his body upon him, bending his head down backward over the rail, in order to prevent him from struggling effectively. Eric knew that everything depended on the success of putting Poole out of business, and he used every ounce of his powerful muscle to that end. He was in desperate earnestness, and Poole was like a baby in his grasp. In three minutes the rascal lay senseless and inert, while the sloop, relieved of the hand at the tiller, began to perform strange antics, which Eric hastened to correct by throwing Poole against the rudder arm and thus steadying it.

"Now for Grace," breathed Eric, approaching the cabin door.

Looking in, he saw the dark, sleeping forms of Ringle and Brady stretched upon the port and

starboard lockers. Slipping off his shoes, he bent down, entered the cabin and walked slowly to where Grace sat watching his approach with staring eyes. She had seen something of the struggle between Eric and Poole through the open door, but had been so terrified at the thought of the peril facing the boy she thought more of in this world than any one but her father, that she could not tell for certain who had come off the victor.

"Grace!" whispered Eric, as he drew close to her.

With a smothered sob from her surcharged heart, she quietly sprang up, threw her arms about his neck and kissed him. It was the first kiss she had ever given him or any other boy, but such was the intensity of her feelings that she could not have helped doing what she did if she had died for it.

"Oh, Eric! Eric!" she whispered, trembling like an agitated leaf in his arms. "Are you really safe?"

"Yes. Come out of this as softly as you can."

He pushed her gently ahead of him. She shuddered visibly as she passed close to the slumbering Ringle. Something, however, caused Eric to pause. Something which caused his nerves to tingle and his blood to leap with excitement. He saw the butt end of a revolver sticking out from under the rolled-up blanket which served Ringle for a pillow. Dare he venture to take it? With that weapon in his hand the success of his plans seemed assured. But if Ringle should wake up suddenly and catch him before he could withdraw the revolver from its resting-place everything would be lost. It was another case of pure grit.

Softly he placed his fingers around the handle of the weapon and with the utmost care he drew it, inch by inch, from under the blanket until at last he held it in his hand and Ringle still slept on. Grace, looking back through the opening, had watched his daring feat, with her heart in her mouth. Her face lit up with a great happiness when he rejoined her, closed the sliding door, secured it with a wooden staple, and thus effectually secured the chief rascals in the cabin. Pure grit indeed had made Eric master of the situation.

CHAPTER XIV.—At the Point of the Pistol.

"Now, Grace, I think I can depend on you to steer for a few moments," said Eric, regarding her with a smile of satisfaction. "You have had some experience with boats, I think."

"Yes," she replied, looking fearfully at the inanimate and livid-faced Poole where he lay against the tiller.

"I'll put him out of the way," said Eric, observing her glance of aversion.

He grasped the insensible rascal around the waist and dragged him to the forward hatch. Removing the cover, he fished out the cord which had been around his own wrists and tied Poole's hands with it, then he lowered him into the hole, but left the cover half off so he could get plenty of air. This accomplished, he returned to Grace's side and relieved her. Then he turned the sloop's head toward the Long Island shore, distant about a mile. He could not tell how far they had come, but guessed it must be all of thirty miles from

the entrance to the inlet of Manhasset Bay, for he calculated it was now about midnight.

"Why, Eric, you are all wet!" exclaimed Grace, in surprise and some dismay, noticing for the first time that the boy's shirt sleeves clung limp against his arms and that his garments looked sodden and wrinkled.

"I'll tell you how that happened," he said, but she interrupted him with:

"Why don't you put on your jacket? You'll catch your death in your wet condition."

"I haven't any jacket, Grace; it was left behind in Will's boat at the time we boarded the sloop."

"But you ought to have something on, Eric," she insisted, anxiously.

"Well, I think so myself, so I'll just relieve that chap in the hold of his jacket. He has no use for it down there. It's warmer than toast in that hole."

Accordingly yielding the tiller once more to Grace, he went forward and possessed himself of Poole's jacket.

"This makes a heap of difference," he said, when he returned to the girl.

"I should think it did," she replied, with a smile.

In a few minutes Eric tacked again, shoving the boom over the starboard rail. He had scarcely accomplished the maneuver before there was a noise at the cabin door. This was followed by a smothered oath and an impatient pounding on the wood. Grace snuggled closer to her young protector and gave an involuntary shiver.

"Let him knock," snickered Eric. "It's good exercise."

"What in thunder is the matter with you, Poole?" sang out Ringle, evidently hot under the collar.

"I'm thinking if he waits for Poole to answer him he'll wait some time."

"Poole, you jackanapes, have you gone to sleep?" roared Ringle, again, starting up a fresh and heavier rat-tat-tat on the panel.

"Poole!" bowled Brady, adding his ponderous fist to Ringle's, and both making noise enough to waken the dead.

A momentary silence ensued and then came the crash of Ringle's foot against the door. The slide shivered and bulged under the blow. It was plain another kick or two would demolish it.

"That won't do at all," said Eric, putting the tiller into Grace's hand. "I must put a stop to any more demonstrations of that kind."

Another kick, this time from Brady's boot, came upon the slide before he could interfere, and the wood was partially splintered.

"That will do, gentlemen," said Eric, drawing the revolver from his pocket. "If you try that again I shall put a ball into one or both of you!"

His remarks caused a sensation in the cabin. It was the first intimation they had, aside from the locked slide, that things were wrong on the outside. Ringle put his eyes to the break in the door and what he saw caused him a tremendous shock. For the next minute he made the air of the cabin tingle with shocking language. Brady took a look also, and he ejected a few forcible remarks that wouldn't bear repetition.

"Let us out, you pestiferous little monkey, or we won't do a thing to you!" shouted Ringle, in a violent rage.

"Don't get excited, gentlemen," replied Eric,

ironically. "You might sprain a blood vessel. Keep cool, or there'll be something doing at this end which may prove unpleasant to you."

Ringle, in great rage, smashed half the door out with a kick, whereupon Eric, true to his threat, fired point-blank into the aperture. A roar of pain followed, and Ringle fell back on the floor of the cabin with a broken arm. This display of resolution on Eric's part overawed Brady, and he made no attempt to complete the demolition of the sliding panel, which was now almost a wreck. Ringle swore and moaned alternately, interspersed with an occasional request of Brady that he finish the door and do up Eric Gordon. But Brady didn't care to draw the boy's fire even to oblige his friend in iniquity, so he refused to follow up the attack. Grace continued to steer the sloop while Eric stood guard over the fractured panel, and in this way the boat sailed eastward for a couple of miles before there were any further developments in the case. At length Brady's face appeared at the opening.

"What are you going to do with us?" he asked, in an anxious tone.

"I am taking you back to Manhasset," replied Eric.

"But we don't want to go to Manhasset," protested Brady.

"I suppose not," answered the boy, dryly.

"Can't we make a deal with you?"

"No. You've got to answer for throwing Constable Gray overboard. He may have been drowned for all I can tell."

"How could he when he was within a few feet of the shore?"

"It's to be hoped he escaped, otherwise it would be the electric chair for Mr. Ringle at least."

"Do you know you've broken Ringle's arm?"

"I'm sorry, but it was his own fault. I warned him not to kick that slide again."

"What's the use of having us jailed when we'll hand you five hundred dollars in good money to let us up on us."

"You can't bribe me, Mr. Brady, so you might as well shut up."

That settled the business, and Brady retired out of view. It was four o'clock in the morning when the sloop sighted the point at the entrance to the Sound. Half an hour later, as the sky began to lighten up in the east, Eric ran in to the little wharf near the lighthouse and told Grace to run to the house and see if her father was home. It happened he was asleep in the house. Her summons at the door awakened him. He was greatly surprised to see her there at that early hour, for he supposed she had gone to visit some friend and had been prevailed on to stop all night. A few hasty words explained the situation, much to his amazement and indignation. He came down to the sloop, fully determined that his nephew, Ringle, should pay the penalty for his crimes. Grace was induced to allow her father to take her place in the boat. An hour later they reached one of the Manhasset wharves; Eric sent Mr. Wales for a posse of constables, and in half an hour Ringle, Brady and Poole were landed in jail and the authorities took charge of the sloop, which was crowded with swag from the numerous houses burned during the past month.

CHAPTER XV.—Eric Starts On the Road To Wealth.

When Eric got back home he found his mother in a state of great nervous excitement and worry over the report brought by Constable Gray, who had returned in Batterson's boat, that young Gordon had been carried off by a gang of criminals in a black sloop which had been tied up along the river bank near Neakes' farm. The constable had telegraphed to the police at Whitehaven and New York City to be on the lookout for such a boat, stating that a girl also had been kidnapped and would probably be found on board. Ringle and his associates were brought up before the Manhasset justice for examination on the following day, when Eric Gordon, Grace Wales and several residents of the county, who identified property found on the spot, appeared against them.

They were committed for trial at the next term of the court. Rewards for the capture and conviction of these rascals who had terrorized the whole north shore of Long Island since late in the spring, and which footed up a total of something over \$1,200, were paid to Eric at once by the grateful citizens who had suffered from the depredations of the scoundrels. Even Squire Chudleigh, to whom Eric returned the missing wallet, found on the person of Brady, was grateful to him to the extent of a fifty-dollar bill. Eric deposited his money in the Manhasset Savings Bank, and was now the proud possessor of a pass-book which credited him with the sum of \$2,550. The boy had by no means forgotten Ringle's alleged discovery of granite on Captain Batch's island in Manhasset Bay.

He had long known that the island was for sale—it had been advertised off and on in the county newspaper, but nobody seemed to want it, at least at the price the retired sea captain wanted for it. With the information he had acquired through overhearing Ringle's conversation on the subject with his pal, Brady, Eric started out on a quiet exploring expedition. He had obtained possession of the small bag of specimens found in the cabin of the sloop and which seemed to confirm Ringle's story, and with a few of these in his pocket he made a quiet visit all by himself to the island, and spent all of an afternoon, searching around for indications of similar bits of stone.

He was not at all successful in his search, and was giving the matter up for that day at least when, near the extreme end of the island, where it looked toward the Sound, he came upon a narrow ravine, which he followed to its termination. Here he found abundant evidence of granite, similar in every respect to the sample he had with him.

Eric judged there must be an immense deposit of the material on the island. Next day the boy took a Long Island train for New York City, with the address of a noted mineralogist in his pocket. He took the bags of specimens collected by Ringle with him and submitted them for examination. He was told that the samples represented a very fine order of building material, and the gentleman assured him that he did not know of any place outside of Barre, Vt., or per-

haps one or two places in Massachusetts, where such excellent granite could be found.

"A quarry of such stone would be very valuable, then?" suggested Erie.

"Valuable!" exclaimed the specialist. "I should say so. It would be worth a fortune."

This statement was quite satisfactory to Eric, and with his head filled with visions of untold wealth, and the good things a lot of money would procure, he returned to Sayville. He said nothing to his mother about the object of his trip to the metropolis.

"It will be a great and happy surprise for her if I begin life with a successful start such as this thing promises to be. I am going to take the risk of buying that island with what I have in the bank. And that reminds me, I am under age. The deed will have to be made out in mother's name."

It was Eric's method always to strike while the iron was hot, for, he thought, there's many a slip between the cup and the lip, and the fellow who procrastinates is generally sure to get left. So he called at once on Captain Batch and made him an offer of \$2,500 spot cash for the island. The captain was willing to accept this offer, but was very curious to know why Eric wanted property that seemed to be a drug on the market. Eric told him he had a scheme in view which might or might not prove successful; at any rate he was willing to take the chances of buying the island on the strength of it. Captain Batch told him to come around in a few days and bring his mother. Eric agreed, but insisted on the captain giving him a thirty-day option, for which he was prepared to deposit \$100 on account. When Eric told his mother that he wanted her to take title for him to the Batch island she put up a strong protest, on the ground that the purchase was a very foolish one, and that her son was surely throwing his money away.

Her opposition was so determined that Eric was afraid he would have to confide his secret to her and thus spoil the surprise he had in store for her, and which he had set his heart upon. In this emergency he thought of the Misses Gardner, on whose friendship he knew he could depend. So he called upon them and explained the situation. Miss Priscilla thought so well of the project that she promised to call upon Eric's mother and see if she couldn't persuade Mrs. Gordon that her son was really doing a very sensible thing by purchasing the island. She did so without delay. Eric never learned what arguments the kind-hearted spinster used to effect her object, but certain it is she won the postmistress over, and that day week Mrs. Gordon accompanied Eric to the residence of Captain Batch, when the island was transferred to her in trust for her son.

As soon as all the legal requirements of the sale had been complied with, Eric went to New York and induced the mineralogist expert to visit the island and thoroughly examine the property with reference to its granite formation. His report was thoroughly satisfactory to the boy. At his suggestion Eric got up a prospectus looking to the formation of a corporation to be known as the "Manhasset Granite Company." Eric acted as his own promoter and solicited subscriptions to the capital stock from all the moneyed people

of the neighborhood whom he cared to have associated with him in the enterprise. The Misses Priscilla and Phoebe Gardner headed the list with the largest personal subscription, and among others John Batterson subscribed \$1,000 for ten shares, which he presented to Will, who was most enthusiastic on the subject as soon as his chum made him wise to the merits of the investment.

A preliminary meeting of the new company was called, articles of incorporation were drawn up by a Manhasset lawyer, Eric, Will and two others were named as the incorporators, and the papers were submitted to the Secretary of State of New York. In due time Eric received the official confirmation from Albany and the granite company became an assured fact. Arrangements were at once made to begin the business of opening up a quarry and putting the material on the market. By this time Ringle and his companions were brought to trial, convicted on the evidence furnished by Eric and the other witnesses, and sentenced and sent to the State prison at Ossining for a term of years.

Eric, as a matter of course, did not drive the mail and express wagon any more, though his mother continued to retain the store and post-office at Sayville, but devoted his energies to the presidency of the granite company, to which he was unanimously elected by the board of directors at the first annual meeting. Perhaps the happiest girl in all the county, certainly the one who took the greatest interest in Eric's prosperity, was Grace Wales, the light-keeper's daughter. Eric had asked and received permission to call on her regularly, and, of course, that meant, in the eyes of the good people of the neighborhood who were acquainted with the youthful and handsome pair that one of these fine days Grace would become Mrs. Eric Gordon, and rule as mistress over the elegant house which the boy had in his mind's eye, and which the profits from the "Manhasset Granite Company" would surely realize.

That fall the Government began the erection of a new and more substantial lighthouse on the Point, and the fact that Andrew Wales retained his dwelling and continued on the Treasury Department payroll, was sufficient indication that there was no immediate danger of his losing his job, or of not becoming the boss of the new light. Reader, my task is finished. Perhaps you think this is all fiction from beginning to end. If you have any curiosity on the subject, pay a visit some summer to the Long Island town which masquerades under the name of Manhasset and perhaps you'll learn some very interesting particulars about a truly self-made boy whose name, given as Eric Gordon, I am not permitted to disclose. He is now nearly twenty-one, but you'll not meet a finer example of a real American boy anywhere if you were to search the country through, nor a more splendid example of a Boy with Grit.

Next week's issue will contain "ANDY THE MILL BOY; or, RISING TO THE TOP."

Harry—I suppose if I kissed you, you would never speak to me again? Harry—Why do you always look on the dark side of things?

CURRENT NEWS

PLOWS THROUGH SALMON

With her propeller literally chopping up salmon, the City of Bremerton, Puget Sound ferryboat, plowed her way through a run of the fish declared to be the densest ever known in northwest waters. Puget Sound is filled with hordes of hump-back salmon, which have suddenly appeared on their two-year cycle for spawning. They move through the salt water in huge schools or windrows of living silver. Flocks of sea gulls fell to the feast in the wake of the ferryboat.

WORLD'S GRAIN TRAIN RECORD

The world's record for grain trains is believed to have been shattered by the Canadian Pacific Railway recently, when a train of 1-25 carloads of wheat, one mile in length, was operated over the line between Stoughton and Arcola, Sask.

The contents of the cars weighed 5,566 tons, which, with a pull of 2,380 tons, made a total weight hauled by a single engine of 7,946 tons.

The great string of cars contained 185,000 bushels of wheat.

HEART DISEASE KILLS MOST PEOPLE

Heart disease killed more people in the United States and Canada in 1922 than any other one disease, according to figures recently compiled by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Eleven years ago tuberculosis was responsible for the greatest number of deaths, but it has declined into second place. The decline in deaths from tuberculosis was not so marked among white individuals as among colored persons. Typhoid fever was lower in 1922 and the communicable diseases of children, such as diphtheria, scarlet fever and whooping cough, show a lower death rate during the year, although the measles death rate rose slightly.

The diabetes rate increased 10 per cent. during 1922, the highest recorded in 12 years, and alcoholism due to ordinary liquors and not to wood alcohol poisoning rose, as indicated by the statistical bulletin, from .9 per 100,000 to 2.1, or an increase of 133 per cent. This is the highest death rate recorded for alcoholism since 1917, but lower than the rates in the years prior to 1918.

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THE BIGGEST TEN CENTS' WORTH ON EARTH!

Wrecked On The Desert

— OR —

THE ADVENTURES OF TWO BOY PROSPECTORS

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued).

Arthur was not a little stirred up when he heard it all.

"If only I wasn't helpless I wouldn't mind," he said, "but I don't know what good I'd be if the house was raided by that bunch. However, you simply can't refuse, so go ahead, but get back as quickly as you can."

The start was made right after breakfast. Nothing was seen of Edna. Pedro looked worried and had nothing to say.

Now Jack found opportunity to see something more of the place.

They passed the herd feeding in a broad field, where such grass grew as Jack never dreamed could exist in Nevada. Beyond that were cultivated fields in which, in spite of the lateness of the season, vegetables of many sorts were growing.

"You raise everything you need for your own use, I suppose?" remarked Jack.

"Yes, and much goes to waste," was the reply. "The land is most fertile, and, though it scarcely ever rains, I have an irrigating system which enables us to utilize the lake water. It is a fine farm. I love the work and the life."

"Does it ever get cold?"

"Never had a frost since I came here. I get crops all the year round."

Soon the ascent began, and they climbed high into the range, coming out at last at a point where the desert could be seen for miles.

"Here's where Edna caught your signal," remarked Nemo. "The dear girl knows every inch of the road, and is not afraid to travel it in the dark. She knows no such thing as fear."

"Do I blindfold?" asked Jack, as the car ran in between high rocky walls again and the descent began.

"No," replied Nemo. "I am going to trust you. You shall learn my secret."

The descent was more abrupt than on the other side. When the level was reached, Jack found himself in a winding canyon. They had made many turns, when they came upon an arched passage so narrow that there was barely room for the car to pass. This tunnel suddenly took an abrupt turn, and then came the light. They were out on the desert.

"Natural?" asked Jack.

"Oh, yes," replied Nemo. "I discovered it twenty years ago when I was prospecting here alone. I came over from New Mexico and nearly lost my life, but from that time on I dreamed of my val-

ley. Little did I imagine then that it would ever be my home. But we must look for trials, Jack. If a car came for the doctor, I want to know it. Trouble is, the trail of my own tires is everywhere."

It was so, and he could find no other. Soon the search was given up, and Nemo driving the car at great speed rounded the end of the range and struck off on the desert. But one stop was made, and that was at the wrecked cars, where nothing had been disturbed.

Nemo did but little talking. He seemed greatly worried.

"So strange that man should turn up here," he said, at length, "but, after all, why not? He is an expert mining engineer, and one who does not know his true character could be readily deceived by him. Spencer runs a fearful risk in associating himself with such a person; on the other hand, my acquaintance with the man dates back many years. He may have reformed, but I doubt it."

They had caught the trail of the two cars now, and Jack found himself covering the same ground he had passed over on the day of that terrible walk. Soon they struck the clay and the trail in consequence. The heat was blistering, but the hood of the car was a great protection.

"Now what lies beyond here?" asked Jack. "How far does this clay extend?"

"To the great sink," was the reply. "It is an immense hole right in the clay bed. Probably the result of volcanic action. A big mud geyser, likely, which threw up the clay. We strike around the southerly end of it. Just beyond lies your dry lake."

"Did you ever prospect there?"

"Never. All my prospecting has been done in the range. Boy, I know where there are quartz leads of immense value to some, but of none to me. Not for all the gold the earth contains would I ever go permanently back to civilization."

On, on, and still on, they flew. Soon they hit the sink, a great circular hole at least a thousand feet across. Nemo told Jack that it was fully five hundred feet deep.

Along the edge of this they dashed, and then hit the sand again, but there was no trace of the trail of the two cars.

"We are within a mile of the lake bottom now," said Nemo. "Get out your map and your compass, and see how we stand in reference to Adams' trail."

He stopped the car for this purpose, and they made a careful study. Jack came to the conclusion that they must be at least three miles north of the point Adams had marked on his map.

They ran on to the dry bottom, which was broad and shallow but plainly marked for what it had once been, being depressed fully fifty feet below the floor of the desert. Then, striking south, they halted at last at what Jack decided must be the place indicated.

"Well, shall we make a brief try for it?" asked Nemo. "I am willing to give up an hour—no more. Then we take up the search for the Spencer party again."

(To be continued.)

GOOD READING

LOST PEARLS RETURNED TO FINDER

A string of pearls, said to be worth thousands of dollars, which was lost by Mrs. Herman A. Metz, wife of the former Comptroller of New York City, was recovered through a newspaper advertisement, it was reported. It was said that Mrs. Metz rewarded the finder with \$1,000.

Mrs. Metz lost the pearls while returning from a theatre a few days ago. When she discovered the loss she advertised for them, and a day or so later the pearls were brought to her by the finder.

SHOOT BIGGEST CARIBOU.

A caribou killed by D. W. Bell of Williamsport, Pa., member of a party from the Eastern States just arrived at Wrangell, Alaska, after a big game hunt in the Cassiar country, across the Canadian boundary from Wrangell, was pronounced by experts the largest specimen ever seen.

The caribou had antlers with thirty-eight points, with a spread of $55\frac{1}{4}$ inches and a length of $65\frac{1}{2}$ inches. It was of the Osborne species.

The party brought in more than 100 caribou slain by its members. Many of these were of usual size. R. N. Burns of Boston killed a moose whose antlers had a spread of $61\frac{1}{2}$ inches. State Senator Robinson of Mohawk, N. Y., slew three grizzly bears, one of which was 10 feet 2 inches long and weighed more than 800 pounds.

A VALUABLE ISLAND TO THE U. S. GOVERNMENT

Tutuila, the Samoan island which, with its outlying small islands of Manua, Olosega, Ofu, Aunu and Rose, is known as the American Samoa and became a possession of the United States by virtue of the tripartite treaty with Great Britain and Germany in 1899. According to the Bureau of Statistics of the Department of Commerce it has an area of 55 square miles. It has the most valuable island harbor, Pago-Pago, in the South Pacific, and perhaps in the entire Pacific Ocean. It is said of the harbor that it could hold the entire naval force of the United States, and is so perfectly arranged that only two vessels can enter at the same time. The coaling station being surrounded by high bluffs cannot be reached by shells from outside. The census figures are about 8,000 population, consisting of native Polynesians and Christians of different denominations. Commercially the island is unimportant, but exceedingly valuable in its relations to the commerce of any nation desiring to cultivate trans-Pacific commerce. Tutuila is 4,160 miles from San Francisco and 2,263 miles from Hawaii.

1,500,000 VISITORS TO NATIONAL PARKS

Nearly 1,500,000 persons visited and made use of the National parks and mountains, the grand national playgrounds set aside by Congress for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, during the 1922 season, according to a statement made by the Interior Department recently.

Great rivalry has existed between the various parks during the summer as to which would prove

the most popular at the close of the season. The honor goes to Rocky Mountain National Park, in Colorado, which had a visiting list of 218,000 persons. Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, takes second place with 138,352 visitors, but Yellowstone's record is perhaps the most noteworthy, as the great park does not lie as close to the great centers of population, and the season lasts only three months. Yellowstone's nearest rival was Yosemite National Park, in California, which had 130,046 visitors. Mount Rainier National Park, Washington, had the greatest increase, jumping from 70,376 visitors in 1922 to 123,708 visitors in 1923.

Other parks showing over 100,000 visitors are Platt National Park, in Oklahoma, with 117,710 visitors; Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas, with 112,000 visitors, and Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona, with 102,166. The smallest park attendance was at Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska, 34 hardy visitors having made trips into the park over the difficult trails with saddle and pack outfits.

The national monuments drawing the heaviest attendances were Muir Woods, California, which attracted 91,253 persons; the Petrified Forest, Arizona, which was visited by 45,475 persons, and the Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska, which had 20,000 visitors. Travel to Scotts Bluff increased more than 200 per cent. over the past year, as a result of greatly improved roads and trails and better facilities for picnic parties.

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By GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD

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INTERESTING RADIO NEWS AND HINTS

SUBCONSCIOUS MIND AIDS MEMORY

A novel method of instruction has been devised by naval radio instructors. The subconscious mind, which functions when we sleep, was appealed to with remarkable results. It was found that some students had difficulty in learning to receive radio messages, so the instructor coupled head phones to some of the students while they slept and sent radio messages to them in the hope of appealing to their subconscious minds. It was found that the students upon whom the experiment was tried made remarkable progress within a few days in their ability to receive. The method having been established, it was extended to other students, and it is said that results in nearly all cases have been very satisfactory.

WOODED BY RADIO

Mrs. Emma E. Mapother, No. 515 Farmers avenue, Hollis, Queens, L. I., believes that when a husband becomes a radio enthusiast to the extent that he spends all his spare time with a head-piece clasped about his ears and neglects his wife, he is guilty of cruel and inhuman treatment.

She has accordingly applied for alimony and counsel fees pending the trial of her suit for separation from George Mapother.

The plaintiff told Supreme Court Justice Lewis that George became a radio fan and would sit up nearly all night listening to the Hertzian waves waving, and would "start an argument" when she asked him to retire. Mapother denied the charges. He says his wife is not a "radio widow."

REMEDIES FOR BODY CAPACITY

When an operator's hand touches or nears the dials of a receiving set the signals in some instances fade or become stronger as long as the hand is held in a definite position. This annoyance is caused by what is termed "body capacity." The fact that the operator's body possesses a definite capacity with respect to grounded conducting mediums and the various parts of the set creates the effect.

The grid is most sensitive to body capacity effects and the plate is next in order of susceptibility. There are several methods of counteracting body capacity. If a series condenser is used in the antenna lead-in the terminals of the movable or rotor plates should be connected to wire leading from the antenna; if the condenser is in the ground circuit the terminal of the rotor plates should be connected to the wire leading directly to the ground. When a tuning condenser is used across the secondary of the tuner the terminal of the fixed plates should connect to the wire leading from the grid or grid leak.

SCOTLAND YARD USES RADIO

Scotland Yard has a radio equipped car for use in connection with its Flying Squad. Dispatches can be received and transmitted from the car when it is traveling forty miles an hour, with an operating range of fifty miles. Three transmit-

ting tubes are used in the sending outfit and seven tubes make up the receiving circuit. The set was designed by the Marconi Company in conjunction with Scotland Yard engineers. A large capacity aerial is mounted on top of the vehicle. It can be raised or lowered from inside the car.

It is reported that when detectives are on the track of criminals conducting a raid the car is driven to a mile from the scene of action. Detectives, armed with transmitting and receiving sets in suitcases, then proceed to the spot and send messages to the car, which in turn establishes communication with headquarters where a nine-tube set is employed to communicate with moving cars. It is planned to have a system of wireless inter-communication between headquarters and the County Constabulary in operation shortly.

RADIO MAY REVOLUTIONIZE WARFARE

Revolutionizing warfare has come to be an occurrence of periodic happening. The invention of steel ships revolutionized it, so did airplanes and poisonous gases. Now comes a report from Germany that it is to be revolutionized again, and this time by the introduction of a radio wave that will completely disable the electrical units of motor-driven vehicles of the enemy.

A number of automobiles fitted with high-tension magnetors were taken toward the Neuen radio plant in Germany recently. When the cars had gone a certain distance, the conductor of the party announced that something would happen to the cars but would not affect the passengers. The cars soon stopped and it was found that the magnetos had "gone dead" in each of them. It is said that special waves were sent out from the radio station in Neuen and that these waves killed the magnetos. It was announced that other experiments would be conducted upon airplanes, electric trains and even submarines.

What is really needed is scientific research that will result in a discovery of some way to change human nature so that wars will not be needed to clarify the atmosphere.

RADIO TELEPHONY IN SOUTH AMERICA

In Santiago, Valparaiso, and several smaller Chilean cities interest in radio telephony is growing steadily, and its fuller development only awaits the establishment of a broadcasting station within the country such as those now in operation on the east coast of South America, according to a report from the Department of Commerce. It is reported that broadcasting stations recently erected in Buenos Aires, Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro are giving very satisfactory results, and large numbers of amateur receiving sets have been sold in these countries. This is especially true of the Argentine, where conditions for broadcasting programs are almost ideal as the land generally is flat and radio transmission carries all over the River Plate district, Uruguay and to Southern Brazil on the north as far as the Andes on the west. For this reason the sale of

radio equipment has met with great success in that country, and it is now estimated that there are approximately 25,000 sets in Argentine Republic, in comparison with about 100 less than one year ago.

NEW AND CHEAPER SETS

It is reported that the rush to procure receiving sets in England has abated, and manufacturers to fight for survival are introducing more efficient apparatus and many novel features. The decrease in sales has brought about competitive prices, and this is forcing manufacturers to produce equipment at prices within the means of a greater percentage of the public.

It is pointed out that there are thousands in the British Isles desirous of having a radio set, but the complete apparatus is so expensive that they can only buy the parts and assemble the set themselves. Our radio follower explains that cameras are easier to build than radio sets, but the person normally interested in photography can purchase such apparatus at reasonable prices, and if he cannot afford it he loses interest. The fascination for radio is so strong that he buys the parts and makes the set himself. The pursuit seems irresistible to thousands and this makes the radio industry one to be looked upon with optimism. It is predicted that the turning point in the history of broadcasting will be reached when every effort is made by the manufacturer and retailer to assure the public that for a reasonable sum a reliable service can be enjoyed.

INSULATING MATERIALS

It is imperative that a radio system be properly insulated to produce highest efficiency. Materials which do not conduct electricity are insulators. Glass is a poor conductor of electricity, and for this reason glass, which does not contain metallic veins, is often used as an insulator. Air is generally a good insulator.

The ability of a material to resist the stress imposed upon it by high voltages is called its "dielectric strength." Electricity, like water, will attempt to escape from its confines unless properly guided. Radio currents are of high frequency, and good insulating materials must be employed to prevent leaks and short-circuits. The dielectric strength varies with different materials, and for this reason insulating material should be chosen with respect to the use to which it is to be put.

The insulating, or conducting, quality of a substance is determined by the number of electrons in the substance which are available to move about. Cheap insulation is likely to be detrimental. Materials which will absorb moisture are not good insulators. Some grades of fibre fall into this class. Any material which is likely to melt under warm conditions will become sticky and pick up dust, making it a poor insulator.

INTERNATIONAL UNION

The International Union of Scientific Radio Telegraphy was organized two years ago for the purpose of furthering through international co-operation the systematic study of fundamental problems of radio communication. Separate sections have been formed for a number of different countries and the work of the American section has

been in progress for over a year. Recently systematic measurements have been made at receiving stations in the United States of the intensity of signals received from several French stations, and by a continuance of these measurements it is expected that more comprehensive knowledge will be obtained of the phenomena of radio transmission.

A meeting of the American section was held very recently at which the various committees reported, including committees on the study of radio wave intensity, atmospheric disturbances, variations of radio wave direction, measurements of radiations which cause interference, and electron tubes. Particularly in the case of the measurements of the intensity of radio waves, it is important that international co-operation be promoted, since it is only by frequent simultaneous measurements that accurate results may be had.

BROADCASTING REALISTIC PIANO MUSIC

Broadcasting realistic piano music has long been a real problem for the radio engineer. The difficulty is similar to that which has confronted the maker of phonograph records. The blows of the hammers on a piano are distinguishable, but the singing quality and the overtones which are relatively weak have not been properly reproduced through loud-speakers and telephones in the past. Engineers connected with the WGY studio at Schenectady have devoted a great deal of time to the solution of the problem, and they have now developed a device which will make the piano solo a real feature of the broadcasting program. The device, in brief, consists of a magnetic system between the poles of which is pivoted a suitable coil system. The magnet is firmly fastened to the frame of the piano and the coil is anchored to the sound board. By means of this pick-up device all tones in the piano are faithfully converted into corresponding electric currents which control the radio transmitter. When heard on the loud-speaker the piano is no longer a tinkling sound. The listener gets all the characteristics of this percussion type of instrument, such as the blow of the hammer, the singing tone and the overtones. The piano pick-up is free from the familiar hiss of the carbon microphone as well as the objectionable blasting that takes place when an artist plays too loudly for the microphone. When the carbon or condenser microphone is used to pick up a vocal solo with piano accompaniment the problem is to place the microphone in such a position that it picks up both voice and instrument in their proper ratio. The position of the microphone must be changed for each artist. The radio listener has probably noticed that as the singer increases the volume the accompaniment fades out; in other words, the soloist "paralyzes" the microphone. When the piano magneto-microphone is used the intensity of the piano may be adjusted electrically in the control room, even while the selection is being rendered, as the voice is recorded on the customary carbon or condenser microphone. In the grand piano at WGY there are three of these devices: one in the extreme treble, one in the middle register, and one in the base. The three outputs can be readily balanced in the control room for the best results on receiving sets without tampering in any way with the instrument.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

BAVARIAN FLYING TRICYCLE

Traffic problems in American cities may be further complicated if the flying tricycle which a Bavarian concern manufactures proves successful. This machine is designed to operate in city streets, to sail the ocean or to fly. It is a combination of airplane, seaplane and motorcar and has folding wings which can be adjusted so as to traverse the ordinary highways.

The machine weighs less than 200 pounds, has a 4 1-2 horse power motor and is only twelve feet long. It can carry oil for a five hour flight, according to the manufacturers, and will have a maximum speed of 125 kilometers an hour.

HAS RUM IN WAISTCOAT THAT IS BULLET-PROOF

A bullet-proof waistcoat of copper containing one gallon of high-proof liquor was found on Casper Minalgo, a milk dealer, according to the police, when he was arrested on charge of reckless driving and violation of the State Liquor Law of Delaware.

Minalgo asked that his case be continued to prepare his defense. The unique arrangement was strapped around his waist and was the most novel contrivance to transport liquor, the police say, they have ever discovered.

U. S. BUILDING THE FASTEST FIGHTING SHIPS

The battle cruisers Saratoga and Lexington, which are being converted into aircraft carriers by the United States Government, will be the fastest fighting ships in the world. These sister ships will have 35,000 tonnage each, and their 180,000 horsepower can drive them through heavy seas at 35 knots an hour. Their flying decks will measure 825 feet by 100 feet and they will carry fully set up and ready for battle between 100 and 150 airplanes, depending on their size. The Saratoga will probably be commissioned in 1925.

Under the Five-Power Treaty, the United States and Great Britain were each allotted a

total of 135,000 tons of aircraft carriers between 10,000 and 27,000 tons each. The Japanese insisted on converting two battle cruisers then building and which were in excess of the tonnage limit. By special arrangement this was agreed to and the United States, as a result, was permitted to convert the Saratoga and Lexington, which, as battle cruisers fully armed, had a tonnage of 43,500 each. At present Great Britain has six carriers in commission and Japan one, which two others building. We have none in commission, as the Langley, which was conducting a series of tests recently, is only experimental. When the Saratoga and Lexington are in commission, the United States will have 69,000 tonnage remaining under the Five-Power Treaty for carriers of more than 10,000 tons. There is no limitation on the construction of carriers under 10,000 tons, or approximately the same in flying facilities as the Langley.

LAUGHS

Mrs. Nuwed (to dear friend)—What's the secret of getting a new frock from hubby after he refuses once? Mrs. Wiley—If at first you don't succeed, cry, cry, cry again!

"Yes, I was awfully fond of that girl, and I believed her to be perfect, but I saw something about her last night that made me ill." "What was that?" "Another fellow's arm."

Host—Why did you strike my dog? He only sniffed at you. Visitor—Well, you don't expect me to wait until he tasted me, do you?

"Is this the hosiery department?" said the voice over the phone. "Yes," replied the weary saleslady. "Have you any flesh-colored stockings in stock?" asked the voice. "Yes," replied the weary saleslady. "Whaddy ya want—pink, yellow, or black?"

Sandy was being entertained at a Soho restaurant, London, and the dinner consisted of rich and fanciful dishes. "Well," he was asked, "what will you have next?" "Ah," replied Sandy, "I think I'll hev indigestion."

Mistress—I don't want you to have so much company. You have more callers in a day than I have in a week. Domestic—Well, mum, perhaps if you'd try to be a little more agreeable you'd have as many friends as I have.

Effie's Brother—Do you love my sister Effie? Effie's Steady Company—Why, Willie, that is a queer question. Why do you want to know? Effie's Brother—She said last night she would give a dollar to know, and I'd like to scoop it in.

"Did you notice that woman who just passed?" inquired he. "The one," responded she, "with the gray hat, the white feather, the red velvet roses, the mauve jacket, the black skirt, the mink furs and the lavender spats?" "Yes." "Not particularly."

INTERESTING NEWS ARTICLES

NO POWDER FOR PIGS AT SHOWS

At a meeting of the Council of the National Pig Breeders' Association, London, consideration was given to a proposal made that steps should be taken to prohibit the use of artificial whitening and powder on pigs, and the following resolution was carried by thirteen votes to two: "That the use of artificial whitening or powder on large white and middle pigs exhibited at agricultural shows and at sales conducted under the association's auction rules be prohibited, and that at a show of an agricultural society which had agreed to adopt this rule the judge be empowered to disqualify any pig so whitened or powdered."

GEM-SET WEAPONS SHOWN AT MUSEUM

Jeweled weapons massed with diamonds and other precious stones, said to be worth \$1,000,000, have just been placed on exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in one of the small rooms devoted chiefly to Turkish armor, in the department of arms and armor.

The collection has been lent to the Museum by Miss Giulia Pertinax Morosini. It consists of six daggers, a pistol and a sabre. The blade of the sabre is black, with a jeweled inscription upon it, and the handle is of white jade, with diamonds and emeralds set in. A chain of pearls hangs from the handle.

One side of the scabbard is covered with inscriptions carved in gold, and the entire length of the other side is ornamented with an elaborate design in diamonds, with four large emeralds. Flowers are formed by clusters of diamonds with big solitaires in the centre. The inner curved edge of the scabbard is set with diamonds in a delicate design.

The sabre is Turkish, dated A. H. 1688, and later was the property of the Sultan Amurat V.

Of the six daggers, which are in another case, four have handles of white jade, plain or simply carved, one in the form of a horse's head. Another has a crystal handle and the sixth a handle of black jade. Jewels are set in the scabbards. The point of each scabbard is finished with a large stone.

The daggers are laid upon red velvet in a large tray of carved metal, with inscriptions on the four sides, each set in a different stone, one in turquoise, one in emeralds, one in rubies and the other in diamonds.

SNAKES PROTECT GARDENS AND ORCHARDS

Snakes are the most detested by man of any form of animal creation, yet snakes are far more useful than many of the creatures toward which man feels friendly. A little study of information at hand regarding the good that snakes do will prove the point.

The blacksnake, numerous in the rocky crevices of the Ramapo and the Catskill Mountains, will eat eight to ten field mice in the course of a season. According to scientific observation, a

single field mouse may kill thirty trees in a year before they have a chance to take root. Assuming that a pilot blacksnake consumes 150 mice in a season, we see that the snake has saved hundreds of trees.

Second best of the rodent destroyers in these parts is the racing blacksnake, whose weekly diet includes from six to eight mice. Since there are more racing blacksnakes than mountain pilots, it can be said that the racers perform the greater service to farmers and foresters. A single member of the species may save 3,500 trees in a summer.

We have four species of snakes of which comparatively little is known; they are the green snake, the Storer snake, the De Kay snake and the ringneck, the latter found mostly in the mountainous parts of the State. These four reptiles, diminutive though they are, perform a remarkable service to agriculture in killing off insects and worms that feed on the leaves of trees and garden plants.

None of these snakes exceeds eighteen inches in length, yet they devour an inconceivable number of harmful parasites. The green snake has long been known to be death to caterpillars, enemies of fruit and vegetables.

Earthworms are the diet of the Storer and the De Kay snakes and are destroyed by them in large numbers. The ring-necked snake hunts the same kind of food.

Herpetologists rate the blacksnake as the most useful of serpents, but I regard the milk snake as equally valuable. These innocuous and highly beneficial creatures carry a name that gives them a bad reputation. But I believe they would die of thirst before they would drink the liquid after which they are christened. A good-sized milk snake will eat 6 to eight mice a week, or approximately 140 a season. The number of trees thus protected can be figured out as in the case of the other reptiles.

Rattlesnakes and copperheads are servants of man, despite the fact that they are venomous. Both feed upon mice and will eat five or six a week. Their bill of fare sometimes includes a young rabbit, a squirrel or a chipmunk. It is not necessary to point out that squirrels and rabbits do great harm in woodlands and orchards.

The garter snake, the ribbon snake, the hog-nosed snake (also known as puff adder) and the water snake possess few redeeming traits. The garter snake in early life enjoys feeding on earthworms, but soon gives up this menu and begins on toads and frogs, which are of great use as insect killers.

The ribbon snake follows the same regimen as the garter and adds a small fish. The hog-nosed feeds almost entirely upon toads and hence is of no value to the farmer. The water snake destroys many young fish and is thus an enemy to the angler.

Scientific inquiry shows that one milk snake, one pilot blacksnake and one mountain blacksnake will probably save 10,000 trees in a season. This estimate is, I believe, conservative.

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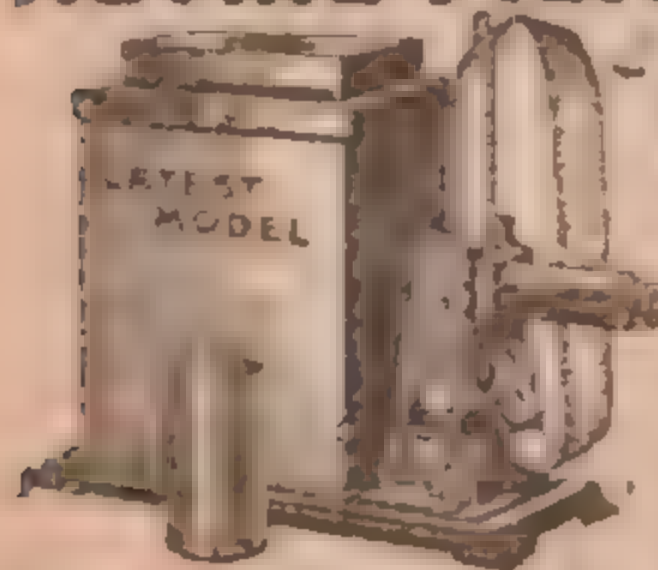
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HERE AND THERE

STANDARD OIL BUILDING ENVELOPS SMALL ONE

Like an oak growing around an interfering obstacle, the Standard Oil Company building, 26 Broadway, New York, which is being remodelled and enlarged, is surrounding a small four story and garret structure at 3 Beaver street.

The smaller building is occupied by a chain restaurant firm which has found the site good for business and disliked giving it up even to allow the Standard Oil home to grow into a thirty story skyscraper. The great office building now hides the restaurant on all sides, except the front and the side toward Broadway. The latter will soon be obliterated leaving only the front visible.

DOCTOR KEPT SAVINGS IN A DUMMY VOLUME

One thousand dollars in Bank of England and Treasury notes was found recently in a dummy volume which proved to be a physician's peculiar cash box. The book was entitled "Surgical Instruments and Appliances"; the leaves had been cut out and the covers formed neatly into a box to which a lock had been fitted.

On the physician's death his widow wishing to sell his library, summoned the agent of a well-known dealer in books. He noticed the dummy and drew her attention to it, but she attached no value to it and said it was to go. On forcing open the dummy at the book store the agent found it was stuffed with Bank of England £1 notes, all of recent issue. He reported his discovery to his employer, who directed him to inform the widow.

When she heard the good news, she fainted. The agent was rewarded with £5.

ROYAL TOMB OF 500 B. C. UNEARTHED IN CHINA

The skeleton of what is believed to be a royal personage, surrounded by bronzes, vases, jade ornaments and other relics, the value of which is placed at \$500,000, was unearthed by soldiers excavating a mound at Sincheng, Honan, according to General Wu Pei-fu.

Carl Bishop of the Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., who was invited by General Wu to examine the find, estimated that the grave dated back to 500 to 1000 B. C.

The skeleton, which was found without a coffin, apparently was preserved by a vermillion preparation, which impregnated the bones. The skeleton, it is said, is probably that of a member of the royal family of the ancient feudal State of Cheng.

The bronzes included a war chariot, four large bells, wine pot, inscribed to the royal family, and bronze tripods. Pearl beads and fragments of a jade coronet were also found.

The tomb was found by soldiers digging a well, and was opened at the order of General Wu. Other mounds in the vicinity will be opened immediately, with Carl Bishop co-operating, General Wu announced.



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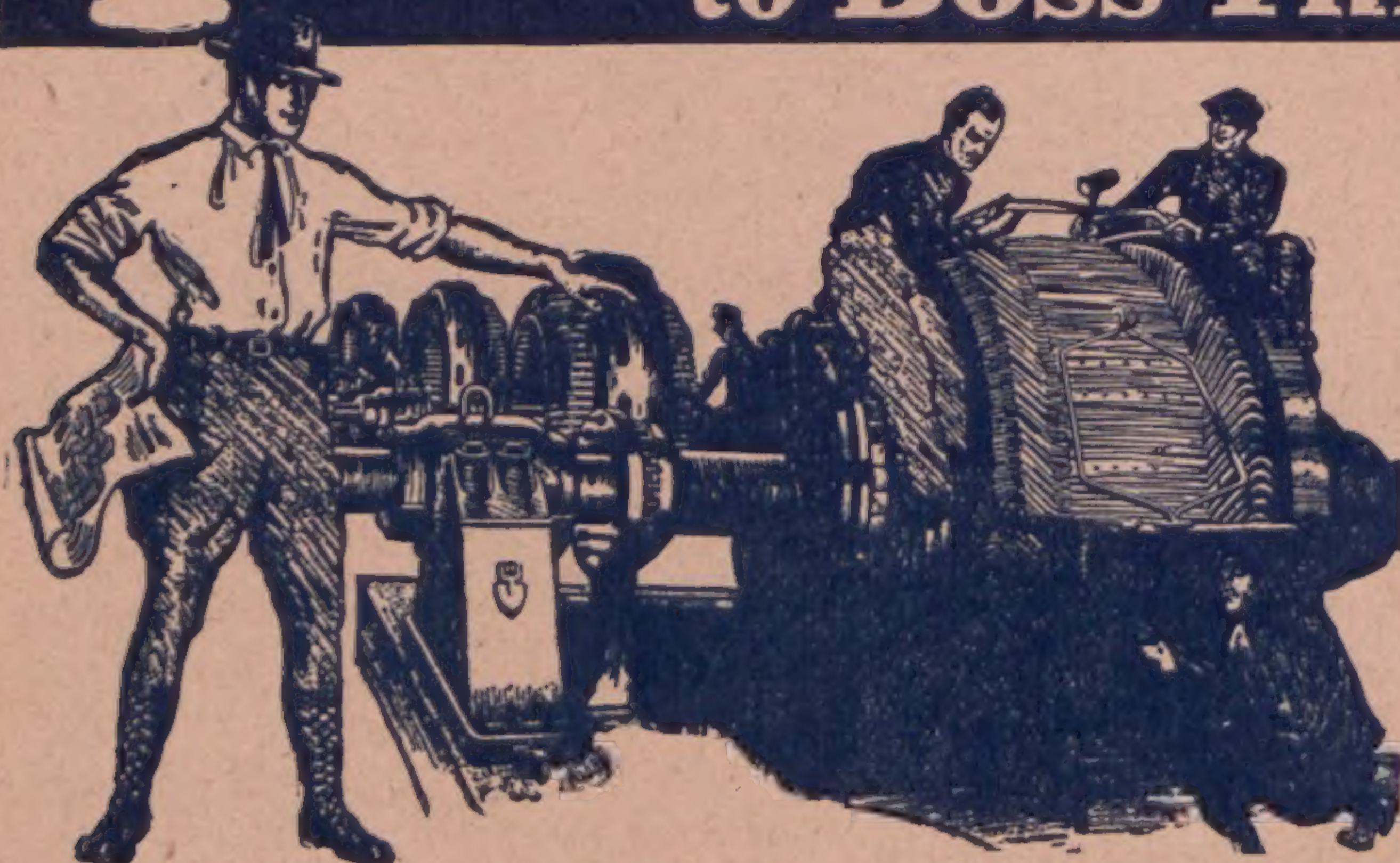
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